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MANUEL CHAVES NOGALES

JUAN BELMONTE

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TRANSLATED AND WITH AN INTRODUCTION BY
LESLIE CHARTERIS

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AND IN THE
DISTANCE
A LIGHT...?

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aspects of the
SPANISH
CIVIL
WAR

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SPANISH CIVIL WAR

From The Edwin Lane
Spanish Civil War Collection

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late editor of "Ahora" Madrid

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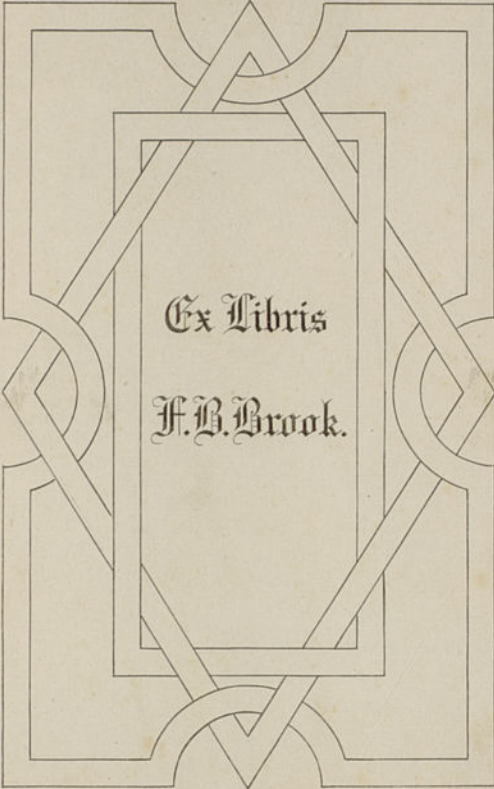
by MANUEL CHAVES NOGALES

Señor Nogales of *Ahora* was one of the most distinguished editors in Spain—"a liberal, who had fulfilled for many years the self-imposed task of telling the Spanish public the facts and the meaning of the paramount events of the day."

At the outbreak of Civil War, he made it clear to the Council of Workers who had taken possession of his newspaper, that he did not believe in Communism any more than he believed in Fascism. He exercised the right that he reserves for himself to leave both paper and country the moment the democratic Madrid Government placed themselves in the hands of the extremists and went to Valencia. That his character and sincerity of purpose were recognised by the workers is proved by the fact that he was given a pass to the frontier.

In exile, he has devoted himself to the task of interpreting to the world the problems of his countrymen. He has chosen the form of fiction, doubtless knowing how "facts" suffer in times of stress. (One remembers the Guernica "controversy".) These nine long stories—each upon a different aspect of the war—are intensely moving: full of pathos, full of heroism, full of the peculiar tragedies that befall a country divided against itself. And Señor Nogales' fiction, where it touches the countrymen he knows and loves so well, may surely be truer than most of the "facts" with which we are bombarded daily and may enable us to form a juster picture of the situation.

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BY

MANUEL CHAVES NOGALES

Translated and Edited by L. DE BAEZA
and D. C. F. HARDING

**From The Edwin Lenk
Spanish Civil War Collection**



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PROLOGUE

By M. C. NOGALES

I WAS one of those men classified by sociologists under the description of "a petty-bourgeois of the liberal school," I was also a citizen of a democratic and parliamentary Republic. I worked in my capacity of an intellectual for an industry controlled by a capitalist bourgeoisie which, in my country, had taken the place occupied by the landed aristocracy who for centuries had monopolized "the means of production and exchange" as the Marxists say. I was able to earn both my daily bread and my liberty with a certain ease by editing papers, contributing articles, features, biographies, short stories and novels. With my efforts in these directions I imagined that I was enlightening the mind of my compatriots and I aimed at awakening their interest in the great main themes and ideas of our time.

When, on my return from Russia, I told in my articles that the Russian workers had a rough life under a dictatorship which they imagined they were themselves controlling, my bourgeois "boss" congratulated me and patted my back in charming approbation. When, on



my return from Rome, I told that Fascism has not been able to increase by one single ounce the bread ration of the Italians and that "moral values" have not experienced any sensible alteration, my boss did not show so much enthusiasm and his faith in my journalistic capacities dwindled considerably. However, I put forward what I honestly considered the truth little by little, amongst the mixed praise and censure of my boss . . . I was able to express my honest ideas on the paramount themes of our time, according to the dictates of my principles as an intellectual of liberal tendencies and a citizen of a democratic and parliamentary Republic.

When, as it sometimes happened, I was unable to use the costly printing plant and tons of printing paper available to publish my views, I contented myself by expounding them to my friends in our gatherings at the café; I said plenty in animated conversations with my fellow journalists at the office and by lecturing to audiences in some literary clubs in the provinces. I felt free to talk without fear of being stopped, without fear of the police or of bullies sporting black, blue, red or any other coloured shirts ready to make me pay dearly for what they might consider my errors of opinion.

Being a hundred per cent anti-fascist and an anti-revolutionist by temperament, I refused systematically to believe in the health-giving virtue of great upheavals and I pinned my faith to the fateful march of the laws

of evolution and progress. Without intending to offend I must say that I consider any revolutionary as pernicious as any reactionary.

In plain language I honestly wanted to bring forward by means of work based on facts or by stimulating fiction what I considered to be the paramount truth, namely, an insuperable hatred of all stupidity and cruelty; an inborn aversion from what is perhaps the only sin against individual freedom, the sin against the Holy Ghost.

But both stupidity and cruelty were taking possession of Spain. How and where had the contamination started? The seeds of the new pest that had germinated in Asia's rotten soil were sent to Spain via Moscow, labelled with the words Communism; from Rome and Berlin came Fascism and Nazism, and the Spaniards—descendants as they are of passionate Celtic-Iberians—were caught unawares and the poison seeds flourished profusely. The fertile soil of Spain that had been barren for three centuries gave a terrifying impetus in a fantastically prolific way to these flowers and the harvest was prodigious. It is useless to try to point out the contagion spots and to blame any particular sector of the social life of the country. Neither the whites nor the reds can throw the blame on one another, for both sides have yielded an abundant crop of very active idiots and murderers.

It is my personal experience that men of my ideas, insignificant as they may be, have accrued enough

merit to deserve to be shot by either side. I know for a fact that before the Civil War started a group of Madrid Fascists had decided to kill me as a precautionary measure against the triumph of the "Social Revolution," whilst I also knew that anarchists and communists were thinking that I would make a wonderful target.

When the Civil War broke out I remained at my post, fulfilling my professional duties. A Council of Workers made up from the different departments of the Paper, of which I was Editor, usurped the place of the rightful owner and assumed full possession. I, who had never been a revolutionary or felt any sympathy towards the dictatorship of the Proletariat, found myself plunged into a Soviet Régime. I then placed my services at the disposal of the Workers just as I had done in the case of my Capitalist Boss, that is to say, on a basis of loyalty towards them as well as towards myself. I made it quite clear that I lacked the revolutionary spirit and I protested against all kinds of Dictatorships, including the Proletariat Dictatorship, and I undertook only to defend the cause of the people against Fascism and Military Rebels. I found myself changed into "The Comrade Editor" and I am able to say that during the four months of War while I was in Madrid at the head of a pro-Government Paper with the largest issue of the whole of the Republican Press no one molested me, either for my lack of revolutionary spirit or for the fact that I was a

"petty-bourgeois" of the Liberal School—a status from which I never veered.

During that period I saw how many a reactionary changed his shirt for the red one of the Communists and how many a well-to-do Bourgeois became a terrible Anarchist. War and fear justified all.

Shoulder to shoulder with the Revolutionaries I, who was not in agreement with their revolutionary ideas, fought with the weapon of my profession against Fascism. My conscience does not accuse me of any apostasy. When I no longer considered that I could continue to help them they let me go in peace.

When I left Spain I was fully convinced that all was lost and that there was nothing left to save; terror had made life impossible and blood was choking me. Let me say at once, with emphasis, that the decision I made to desert my post was not only because blood was spilt by gangs of murderers who brought red terror to Madrid, but also because of the death sown in the town amongst women and children by Franco's air raids. I was as much afraid of the barbarity of the Moors, the desperadoes of the Foreign Legion and Phalangists (the Spanish Fascists) as of the illiterate Anarchists and Communists.

Some "esprits forts" will perhaps insist that these feelings in face of human massacre amount to nothing but a sentimental anachronism. That may be so, but to put it plainly, and without giving life more value than it possesses or attempting to express the

importance, according to present accepted standards, of the act of killing, I still prefer to have no dealings with killers, even though in our times this is a luxury that few can afford.

One pays dearly for this, the price to-day for the Spaniard being no less than a renunciation of the Fatherland—but, to tell the truth, having no choice but to become a kind of washed-out Abyssinian (which is what one becomes under Fascist rule), or a “Kirghis de luxe” as the Bolshevik Agents would have it, it was preferable to plunge one’s hands in one’s pocket and “to follow one’s nose” along the world’s highway or, at least, along that part of the way that is still open to exiles, knowing that in these times of narrow and egotistical Nationalism an exile, a man without a country, is an undesirable guest everywhere, having to pay for the right of being there by sheer humility and servitude. Anyhow, I prefer to be under those conditions in a foreign country than in my own.

When the Government of the Republic abandoned its post and left Madrid for Valencia, I abandoned my post also. As a citizen of the Spanish Republic I considered myself free to act as I did. The power abandoned by the Government in the trenches of Madrid’s suburbs was picked up by the men who remained in the town heroically defending those trenches. Spain will belong to them if they happen to be the victors or it will belong to their enemies if victory goes to them.

The final issue of the present struggle does not interest me very much. I do not care if the future dictator of Spain springs out of one or the other side of the trench. It is immaterial to me. The strong man, the leader, the victor, who at the end of the struggle will plant a masterful foot in the pool of blood into which Spain has been plunged, the man who, with a bloody knife between his teeth will keep his country in strict servitude for at least a quarter of a century, may emerge from either side of “no-man’s land.” One thing is sure, however, and that is that the dictator will not be anyone of the present men who are now at the head of things in the terrible cataclysm that has been let loose over Spain. All of them will go under in the avalanche of bloodshed. Neither will a man rise amongst those who, like myself, have withdrawn in fear and disgust from the fight. Above all, one cannot for a moment believe that the old state of affairs will be restored for it is not possible even to imagine that the politicians, whether monarchist or republican of pre-war times, will step back into their places again. These men are dead to public life.

The man destined to lead what remains of Spain will be the result of the terrible and unintelligent selection produced by war which always kills off the flower of mankind. Will he be a man of the Right or a man of the Left? Red or white? It makes no difference. No matter who he is, in order to impose his will, the first

thing he will have to do will be to recant from the ideal which, at the moment of writing, keeps him glued to the breastwork of a trench ready to kill or to die. No matter who he may eventually turn out to be *that man will have to be a traitor to his cause*. Sooner or later, however, he will arrive at the only reasonable formula possible for human beings, the reorganising of a State on lines that will make it possible for citizens to live in peace. A State that will have normal relations with other States, all of which is precisely what those that are fighting now, blinded by boundless stupidity and cruelty, refuse to admit. The man who will represent Spain will be a product of war which is an unintelligent and terrible selector. There will be one difference only, the new Spanish State will count upon the approval of a group of European nations and the disapproval of another group, according to whether the dominant opinion is for or against democracy. Spain will neither be a fascist colony nor an advance post of communism; neither enslaved under the landed nobility, or the dictatorship of the proletariat. There will be a ruthless kind of government of a peculiar character made up of a mixture of all kinds of political ingredients. A government which, weapon in hand, will force the Spaniards to work like niggers and to suffer, without a murmur, the pangs of hunger and even starvation until the war has been paid for in full. Red or white, fascist or communist, probably none of these or perhaps a mixture of them all, the master of the Spanish galley

who will force the Spaniards to strain at the oars until well out of the storm, will have to be both cruel and inhuman. In any case in the end it will be necessary to gather round a table and there to negotiate in a normal way, and as usual, the more intelligent will get the best bargain. To arrive at this round-table conference Spain will have had to pay a tremendous price of nearly a million and a half of dead, maimed and sick, a colossal sum for the anti-climax of such negotiations.

When I came to this conclusion I left my post in the struggle. I wandered about the Government territory amongst masses of wretched people who, torn from their homes and their work by the ill wind of war, were drifting aimlessly in a state of hysterical dementia. I left my country when I knew that nothing more could be done for Spain.

In a Paris suburb I fell amongst a throng of other men, the residue of humanity left here and there by the monstrous building of totalitarian States. In the third-rate hotel of this Paris suburb, living a miserable life and awaiting the end, were a strange assortment of human specimens of old Europe; Russians, Poles, German Jews and Italian Revolutionaries . . . all of them with tragic faces and embittered by their fate and by the fact that they are hoping to reach an impossible moon, namely, a country of their own choice and to become citizens in their own way. I refused to join these "uprooted" emigrés and in spite of the fact that I feel it is an affront to be a Spaniard now, I am making

an effort to keep my Spanish individuality intact. Neither reds nor whites can deprive me of that.

To free myself from the anguish of expatriation and in order to make a living, I have again started to write and, little by little, I feel the old urge creeping over me. Spain and the Civil War, so near, so topical, so raw, seen from the Paris angle, evoke a thousand memories. I am telling of the things I have seen with brutal frankness. The characters that I am trying to handle as fiction slip from the literary masks I have placed on them and come to life. They say such things and act in such a manner that they make me feel the deepest shame, and I wish they would not do so. In fighting to control them and also myself, and in my desire to remain aloof and impartial, I am writing these stories of the War and of the Revolution, which I would like to have written with the point of a diamond or the pen of an angel so that posterity would have kept them deeply engraved on their hearts. I realize that I have failed in this but perhaps it will be as well if posterity forgets.

M. C. N.

AND IN THE DISTANCE A LIGHT . . . ?

THE motor car at the far end of the street looked like a glow-worm at the bottom of a vast, black chasm. It was the only sign of life, for Madrid, constantly menaced from the air, had taken refuge in darkness, and the fast-approaching headlights threw into sudden relief unsuspected and fantastic architectural beauties on either side of the abyss.

The streets were black and lifeless, fissures in a dead planet, . . . one could sense in their darkness all that is inhuman and monstrous in a great city.

In that depth of desolation someone stirred. Pedro, the militiaman, shook himself from his slumbers with a great effort. He had had no sleep for several days, but he darted from his shelter behind a pillar, rifle ready for action, and stood with firmly-planted feet in the path of the oncoming car. He flashed his torch on to it as the driver switched off the headlights, and pulled up with a squeal of brakes.

"Alto!" rang out Pedro's challenge. "Give the password!"

"The scum will perish at our hands!"

"Proceed, comrades."

The car went on its way, lighting up its surroundings, till it was swallowed up by the night. There was

blackness once more. Pedro, trailing his rifle along the ground, returned to his shelter and to his dozing.

"That is the worst of war and revolution" he told himself. "One is always tired. It would be less hard and less cruel if those taking part could sleep sometimes." His drowsy mind imagined what it would be like to lie in a large, soft bed . . . to stretch his legs voluptuously before curling up into fresh, crisp sheets . . . but when one's eyes were like balls of crystal and the eyelids like lead, when needles seemed to creep along one's spine, then one realised the wretchedness of it all. The only thing that mattered was to win the war, if only that one might sleep again."

Pedro's day had been arduous in the extreme. Between yesterday and to-day (and when was yesterday, when is to-day?) all the absolutely trustworthy militiamen were called on to move the ammunition reserves of Madrid. A number of aviation officers, hitherto loyal, had flown over to the rebels. They knew where the ammunition stores were, and it was feared that before many hours German and Italian machines would come to bomb them. Therefore new hiding places had to be found at once. The High Command had decided on the basement of the old Royal Opera House, but though this was twenty metres below ground the fact that the 150-kilogramme bombs of the enemy would be able to penetrate that far made it vitally essential to keep the situation of the new dump secret.

Pedro, bent almost double by ammunition carrying, as soon as his task was finished, had hastened to mount guard as usual in the streets of the aristocratic quarter, which was full of spies and counter-revolutionaries. They had to be watched. He was tired almost to breaking point, but the pride of doing something worth-while for the cause, and of having been chosen as a man of trust, kept him going. He gained assurance in the knowledge that none of the treacherous air officers would be able to locate the ammunition reserves, and his comrades had seen to it that there would be no more deserters from the aviation section. It would therefore be possible to snatch a few moments of sleep before dawn without fear of imminent danger.

There was silence in the wide Salamanca Avenue, the aristocratic district over which Pedro watched. High above, the stars were shedding their pale light. Half asleep, he looked at them idly. . . . One big star seemed much nearer than the others. It appeared to blink at him mockingly and to change the tempo of its twinkling, as though playing some strange trick. . . .

"Whatever star can that be?" Pedro wondered drowsily. He noticed that it was redder and more brilliant than the others. But was it a star? No, it was a light! He pulled himself with a jerk from his musings. That "star" was a torch sending out signals!

Pedro acted on the impulse common to all militia-

men. He flung up his rifle and sent a bullet whining at the light. It vanished. Then he began to curse himself hotly for his stupidity. If only he had been cool-headed enough to hunt down the spy there would have been an end to his activities. He would have to act more wisely at another sign of treachery. But the light did not appear again.

An hour later Pedro was relieved at his watch, but before going he told the militiaman taking his place.

"Somewhere over there is a spy who signals to the enemy with a light. Try not to frighten him. We can capture him if we are careful."

Half-dead from lack of sleep, Pedro went back to his quarters to snatch some food and rest until the dawn. The quarters were on the ground floor of a magnificent palace, in which the Federation of Iberian Anarchists had established a literary club, public kitchens, and a military guard—seemingly the three fundamentals of the Anarchist organisation in the war.

The spacious rooms of the palace, decorated with fine tapestries, now formed the home of a crowd of peasant families, who had taken flight from the villages invaded by the rebel troops.

Over the thick, luxurious carpets they had spread out their dirty bundles, their kitchen utensils, and even a number of agricultural implements, and there they were leading the incongruous lives of nomads who had crossed the desert of the civil war, and had arrived at some fantastic oasis of the "Thousand and One

Nights," in which they were surrounded by the unexpected lushness of such things as monumental crystal candelabras and ancient gilded clocks on the mantel-pieces. But there was not a single corner where a fire could be made, not a trickle of water for washing and drinking, and not a square yard of meadow where the children might play. Stupefied, without daring to move, those miserable, patient women sat there with their black shawls over their heads; their patient toil-worn hands with fingers knotted like the dead branches of a grape vine, were folded. Hour after hour they spent without stirring, while their children cried lustily, or scrambled on all fours over the priceless carpets.

The Anarchists who in bringing them there, had accomplished, as they thought, a typically revolutionary act, were losing patience with them, and plainly expressed the opinion that the women would be much more comfortable in the courtyard of the inn, but this was only an instance of the childish turn of mind to which revolutionaries were liable. They had argued that by allowing these peasants to contemplate and enjoy this hitherto impossible luxury they would feel compensated for a life-time of poverty.

Pedro pushed his way through the lounging peasants, went into the guard-room, and dropped into an arm-chair. A few pallets and a number of divans were there for the militiamen to rest on, and in the middle of the room was a large oak table, on the top of which

was a radio blaring out such tunes as "Horst Wesel" and "Deutschland Uber Alles."

"That is Radio Seville" Pedro was informed by a militia-man who, without knowing exactly that the tunes were German, was used to hearing them from that station.

"Oh, turn it off," returned Pedro, "I am in no mood to listen to that fool of a General again."

"Let him get it off his chest," said the other. "It is always amusing to hear him."

The voice of the General came from the loud-speaker: "Good evening, ladies and gentlemen." His tone was throaty and braggardly, and as he began his customary tirade of insults, the militiamen took off their ammunition belts, rolling themselves in their blankets, with cigarettes hanging from the corners of their mouths. "Those Red bandits, that Marxist rabble, those mongrels" . . . came the voice.

The militiamen listened with contempt born of indifference. Jimenez, the leader of the group, who was a thin, pale youth, with wild eyes, half hidden by thick spectacles, was listening to the speaker while pacing the room with his hands in his pockets a frozen smile on his dry lips which, with a feverish flush, denoted the symptoms of the consumptive.

"Those idiots, they don't know that we will enter Madrid whenever we like, just when it pleases us," the General was continuing.

"That's what you think," came a remark from one of the militiamen.

The speaker went on:

"The days of resistance are numbered and soon that pack of scum will be brought up for the final reckoning."

"Is that really so? You wait till you come over here, then you'll find trouble in plenty."

". . . we know that the Reds have little defensive resources for Madrid, and to show that we are fully informed of their activities, we know that only yesterday they were busy moving their scanty ammunition supplies."

Jimenez suddenly stopped his pacing. Pedro jumped from his armchair. The rest of the militiamen looked at each other in bewilderment.

"Yes, dear listeners, they have put their ammunition in the cellars of the Royal Theatre—with the utmost secrecy . . ." and the speaker broke off with a derisive laugh.

The radio was sent flying across the room with a furious kick and Jimenez shouted "We are surrounded by traitors! Yes, we will all be killed like rats if we don't look out!"

Pedro, astonished and incredulous, looked about him with suspicion. Who could the traitors be? Then he remembered the light he had seen while on guard. Impulsively he seized Jimenez by the arm. He led him into a corner and spoke hurriedly in a low voice.

"It was foolish to shoot."

"You are right! Let's see whether we can get him now! I am certain that light was sending signals!"

They ran out into the street. The militiamen guarding the entrance saw them hurrying into the darkness. There, in the distance, very high up, very small, a reddish light was blinking. They tried to locate it, but it took some time. The person operating it was obviously in such a position that the light could only be seen from a restricted area. Pedro and Jimenez went up to the roofs of several houses but learned nothing, until at last they discovered, from a garret, a narrow terrace which, without doubt, was the source of the light. It appeared to come from a torch and it looked as though the code used was Morse.

Crossing the street they hurried into the building from which the light came. The terrified porter gave them full information about the tenants. The only one who could possibly be suspected was on the ground floor. The militiamen rang the bell. A trembling old woman answered. The master was not at home, she told them.

"Where is he, then?"

"I don't know."

"Is he on the terrace?"

The old woman became panic-stricken.

"Who is the tenant here?"

"He is an engineer."

"In the Army?"

"Yes, I think so."

"What is his rank?"

"Major."

"That's all we want to know."

The militiamen, pistols in hands, crept up the stairs. Slowly they pushed open the door leading to the terrace. A man was crouching behind the rails and operating an electric torch through them. So absorbed was he in his task he did not notice the arrival of Jimenez and Pedro. The latter tip-toed up to him and rammed the point of his pistol between his ribs. "Don't stop signalling," he ordered harshly.

The man jumped aside and, letting the torch drop, reached for the pistol in his hip pocket. Jimenez, alert for such a move, seized his arm with surprising strength, and twisted the weapon from his grasp. Pedro, brandishing his pistol by the nozzle, gave him a terrific blow in the face with the butt end. The man was now helpless, and Jimenez picked up the lantern, put it in his hands, and ordered:

"Keep signalling, or I will kill you! And send short flashes only!"

The man hesitated, but when he realised that Pedro, with the pistol against his neck, was pushing him towards the wall, he made a gesture of resignation. He had hardly started before Jimenez knocked his arm down, with:

"That's enough for the time being."

The three men waited for a few moments, scarcely daring to breathe. Suddenly, in the distance, there flashed intermittently another light. "Look," cried Jimenez exultantly. They tried to fix the situation of the light but this was difficult, for it was some way off. Once more they forced their captive to signal a few short flashes, until Jimenez decided with a shout "It is coming from the other side of the Castellana Avenue, from the little tower you can just see through the darkness. I am going to the guard-room to get a few trustworthy men to help me there. You stay here and make this man signal short flashes from time to time. When I have got the others, I will flash their torch eight times up and down."

Jimenez, without losing sight of the prisoner, who was being covered by Pedro's revolver, whispered to the latter "I will send some of our comrades to fetch you, and you will be able to continue the hunt with them."

Pedro and the prisoner remained alone in the darkness on the narrow terrace. In front of them was black and noiseless Madrid, suggested, rather than visible, by the silhouettes of the roofs. The two men, motionless, were watching each other through the shadows.

The prisoner was a little man, erect and thin. He fixed his eyes on the militiaman, not even bothering to wipe off the blood which half-obscured his face. A minute passed . . . two minutes . . . Pedro's pistol was unwavering. It was a cold night, and the prisoner

started to cough. Then, after a little while, he asked in a clear voice, with an impressive naturalness of tone, "You are going to kill me, aren't you?"

"I don't know," said Pedro, rather confused.

"Oh, yes, he has told you to kill me."

"I will do as I please. Shut your mouth."

The little man shrugged his shoulders. After awhile he started to lick away the blood that was running into his mouth.

"Will you let me smoke?"

"If you like."

The prisoner took a tobacco-pouch from his pocket and started to roll a cigarette. Before replacing the pouch he offered it to Pedro. "Would you care to roll one for yourself?"

"No thanks."

"Don't mention it."

Pedro was beginning to feel irritable and nervous and, when the man was about to strike a match, he regretted his leniency and knocked it from his hand. "You can't smoke," he ordered.

"Why didn't you say so in the first place?" objected the other. "You've no right to do that."

"I've a right to do as I please, even if it comes to killing you," retorted Pedro hotly.

"Oh, that's a different thing."

Again they remained silent. From time to time the light in the distance shone, as if asking for information. Pedro then forced the prisoner to flash his light three or

four times in reply, to hold the attention of the others. Minutes passed. The little man started coughing again.

"How much longer is this going to last?" he grunted.

There was another long period of absolute darkness. Then Pedro saw the night split by a vertical flash of light. There came another, then another, till eight had been signalled. The two men had been concentrating their gaze on the other station, Pedro a little behind the prisoner, pressing the revolver into his ribs. At the last signal the little man turned his head slowly, his look heavy with premonition.

Pedro drew the pistol up the spine of his captive till it rested on his neck. A shot rang out. The prisoner slouched forward over the rails, clutching the top of them with his hands. Then he slid face-downwards on to the floor, like a sprawling marionette.

The militiaman replaced his pistol. He was about to leave the terrace when he was struck by a sudden curiosity to learn the identity of the dead spy. He picked up the torch to flash it on the face of the corpse, but thought better of it. Who was he? What did he look like? Well, he was just someone, one enemy out of the way, what did it matter, anyhow?

* * * *

As Pedro left the building a car, with four rifles protruding from the windows, drew up. His comrades had come for him, as promised.

"Ready?"

"Yes."

"We have got the other one and are now going to deal with the third station which we have located. It is a house in the Grand Via. There is a chain of these signals, and we have to destroy it link by link before day breaks. Let's hurry."

The car sped off in the direction of the Grand Via. The building under observation was an hotel. They entered the hall and consulted in low tones with the militiaman on guard there. In a body they went up to a top-floor room. From there they could see the light operated by Jimenez from the second station, the leader having remained behind for that purpose. Then Pedro hissed excitedly "Why, there is another light to the west! I am sure it's in the Moncloa Park."

They all focussed their attention in that direction. After a few comments one of the militiamen burst out:

"I know that part of the city. There is only one house high enough for that signal. It is in the Rosales Park, I'm sure of it."

Having settled that fact they asked the militiaman in charge of the hotel "In which of the rooms here do you think the spy is hiding?" They consulted together and came to the conclusion that the only window which would give a view of the two lights belonged to the room of a Catalan aviation officer, loyal to the republic.

"Let's find out just how loyal he really is," suggested Pedro.

Guided by the hotel sentry they were soon led to the

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door of this room. They forced the door open in a concerted rush. Then with their rifles ready for action, the light was switched on. A handsome young man with a dark complexion and black, wavy hair, stood on the other side of a bed, in front of a wide-open window. He was in pyjamas which were open at the neck showing a thin gold chain and a religious medal. He had his hands behind him, and when Pedro shouted "Put them up!" he let fall on to the wooden floor a heavy article which dropped with a great thud. Pedro made a dive for it, and picked up an electric torch. For the second time that night he lost control of himself and shouted:

"Shoot him!" A ragged volley rang out through the night. There was no fear of arousing alarm, or even curiosity by the shooting; not a single window was opened, not a voice raised, and not a sound broke the silence of the corridors of the hotel. It was exactly as if the whole city were uninhabited. In the room next door the occupant awoke startled from his sleep, but after realising with relief that he, at any rate, was unhurt, put his head beneath the bed-clothes and remained motionless until daybreak.

The dead spy, with a thin trickle of blood running from a bullet-hole in his head, was left where he had fallen. He was kneeling, his head resting on the bed, and the cuffs of his silk pyjama-sleeves trailed on to the floor, giving him the appearance of a grotesque but elegant pierrot.

"Can't you get rid of the body?" asked the

hotel sentry. "It will look awful here in the morning."

"Oh, just as you wish. Go upstairs and throw him down the lift shaft," was the answer. The body was thrown down like rubbish being shot on to a dump.

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The top flats of the house in the park from which the fourth light had shone were unoccupied. The tenants, all well-to-do people, had either run away to join the rebels or had been imprisoned. The only flat occupied was on the fifth floor. The porter of the building told them that it was inhabited by a very smart young lady (a protégée of a highly-placed official of the republic), her mother, and a maid. When the militiamen rang the bell they had to wait some time for an answer. Then the door was opened by an elderly woman who did not appear in the least alarmed by the rifles and relentless faces of her visitors.

They pushed their way past her and she at once began to shout:

"What is the meaning of this? There are only women in this house, and the liberty you are taking will make things bad for you. My daughter is just telephoning to the chief of police, and she will get on to the Home Secretary himself, if necessary."

Jimenez replied: "Ask your daughter to come here at once."

"My daughter is in her room, in bed, and she will not come out."

Jimenez signed to his men to enter, and they trooped into the flat. One door they found locked. Forcing it open they found themselves in an extremely daintily-furnished bedroom. Sitting upon the embroidered covers of a very sumptuous bed was a fair-haired girl of striking beauty, who was holding a telephone receiver to her ear. Jimenez seized the instrument, tore it from the flex, and threw it into a corner. Señorita Carmina sat up furiously. Jimenez, without turning a hair, adjusted his thick spectacles and began to question her. Her answers came with such readiness and assurance that the militiamen began to wonder whether they had made a mistake. Jimenez looked towards the window. It was shut, and the blinds and curtains were drawn.

"You are mistaken, I tell you," insisted the Señorita Carmina over and over again. "Possibly," Jimenez was forced to admit but, his suspicion not fully appeased, he decided to check up on the neighbouring buildings.

"I must insist you remain here under guard while I make investigations," Jimenez told her. He looked at his men and decided that Pedro was the only one who could be entrusted with such a task.

"You stay here, Pedro," he ordered. "See that this girl does not move from this room, and prevent anyone getting in touch with friends outside."

Jimenez left the house with his men. Pedro locked the old lady and the maid in a room and, returning to the

Señorita's bedroom, sat in an armchair. "Will you please go into the corridor for a moment?" she asked him.

"No, I won't," retorted Pedro.

"But I wish to get dressed."

"I have no objection."

"So you are trying to take advantage of me?"

Pedro looked at her in disdain and shrugged his shoulders.

"Well, at least turn your head while I slip on my clothes. Look in that direction," she requested with a smile, pointing to the wall farthest from the bed.

Pedro turned away with a disinterested expression. In the corner was a dressing-table with a mirror, in which he could see the reflection of the Señorita. Fighting to control his impulses he looked away, and fixed his eyes on a shelf of books. He picked one or two up and examined them. Suddenly he held one up—

The Morse Code and How to Use It! His eyes shone with triumph. He shut the book and replaced it. Turning to the girl he said:

"I am going to search this room."

"You have no authority to do that."

Ignoring her, he started to open cupboard doors. He turned out the drawers of the dressing-table, and in one of them found a portrait in a silver frame. He knew that face! Where had he seen it before? Then he remembered! It was the face of the spy they had killed in the Gran Via Hotel. "Who is this man?" he demanded of the girl.

"Just a friend. He is an Air Force officer, loyal to the Government. You can make enquiries if you like. He lives in the Gran Via Hotel."

"He lives there no longer!"

"What do you mean?"

"Oh, nothing."

Pedro opened the window and pointed through the darkness in the direction of the hotel. "Over there, do you mean?"

Carmina, taken aback, did not answer. Pedro turned on her and demanded "Where have you hidden the torch?"

"What's that?"

"Come on, where is the electric torch?"

"I don't know what you are driving at!"

Pedro pointed his pistol at her breast. For a moment she hid her face in her hands in terror, but, pulling herself together with an effort, she lifted her head and repeated boldly:

"I don't understand. I have no electric torch."

At this moment Jimenez and the other militiamen returned from a hasty search. They had found nothing, and yet were convinced that the signals had been coming from the flat of Señorita Carmina.

"Yes, this is the place," said Pedro, "and this is the woman who did the signalling! He showed them that he had proof in plenty, the book of Morse Code, and the portrait of the hotel spy, probably the lover of the Señorita."

"What are you waiting for then?" asked Jimenez, with a terrible coldness.

"But this is a woman . . . and her mother is in the next room!"

"Are you going to show mercy? Maybe you are not so strong as I thought." Jimenez turned to Carmina.

"Come on, my pretty one."

"Where are you taking me?"

"Oh, just for a walk."

"Oh no, do not kill me! I beg mercy in the name of God and the Blessed Virgin! I will tell you everything!"

Her assurance had suddenly deserted her. She confessed that the aviation officer, her fiancé, had persuaded her to become a rebel spy. She revealed the location of the station to which she had been signalling. It was a little house beyond the Moncloa Park in the direction of the Guadarrama Sierras, and well on the way to the enemy lines.

Jimenez listened motionless to the confession, then said:

"All right. Now you must come with us."

"You will not harm me, then, will you?"

"Oh, no!"

They left the house and began to walk towards the park. Carmina in front, wrapped in a silk shawl. Next to her walked Jimenez, pistol in hand. After a short distance Jimenez deliberately fell back a little. The girl, terrified, turned her head to see the militiamen

levelling their rifles at her! She gave a wild cry of horror and ran from them with outflung arms. The silk shawl fluttered about her like a butterfly lost in the night. But even as she looked wildly about her for a refuge the rifles of the militiamen spoke death! She fell with a flutter of silk and embroidery, her skirt winding about her thighs revealed slim, tapering legs in fine silk stockings like models in a show window.

The militiamen returned to their car. One of them, however, nicknamed "The Sexton," remained behind. Jimenez, already in the car, shouted "What are you up to over there?"

"Oh, I won't be a minute," was the answer. "The Sexton" was writing these words on a scrap of paper—"Another Fascist spy out of the way." He placed the message near the body, weighing it down with stones. Then he rejoined the others.

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The militiamen were surrounding the house which Carmina had indicated. Their knock was answered by a volley of shots! "The Sexton" went to a nearby outpost of the militia, returning with a score of men. A regular siege was begun. After a time those inside the building, having exhausted their ammunition, gave themselves up. There were five of them, all young, dressed in the militia uniform. They refused to answer any questions. The militiamen searched the house, and in a garret discovered a sixth man, who at once lost

his nerve and confessed everything. He was the batman of one of the five prisoners who were officers in the regular army, and had been masquerading as militiamen while spying.

The officers had been in touch with another link of the signalling chain further afield. From there, the next station was a shepherd's hut, and so on towards the sierras and the enemy lines. Jimenez lined the five officers with their faces to the wall, their arms raised above their heads. Pedro wanted to shoot the batman also—"He is as much a traitor as the rest," he said.

"He is one of us, a man of the people," argued Jimenez. "It is our duty to gain him for our cause. As for the others, they are aristocratic señoritos. For them, redemption is impossible."

There, with their faces against the wall, the five spies were shot. The militiamen's aim in the darkness was none too accurate, and they had to keep firing for some time before the butchery was finished.

Without wasting time they started out for the next signalling station. There were barely two hours of darkness left, and in that time they had to wipe out completely the signalling system.

At the next station they left behind them a fat man, of the bureaucratic type, slumped over his desk, and in the kitchen a group of wailing children and a wretched grey-haired woman, petrified with horror.

The next stage of their task was not so easy. Their approach to the shepherd's hut was given away by the

furious barking of several mastiffs, and a bearded giant of a man came from the hut with a double-barrelled sporting gun. In a couple of huge strides he took cover behind some nearby rocks.

From there he defended himself like a boar at bay. Two of the militiamen fell, one with his face stove-in and the other with his leg shattered by the buck shot. In the meantime Pedro noticed another light signalling.

"There is still another!" he yelled to Jimenez. "We must finish this man off quickly, and get the others before they suspect anything is wrong."

"Things are getting easier now we are in open country. There is the next light, between those two clumps of trees."

The militiamen were closing in on the defender, whose shots were growing less and less frequent. When, after firing for ten minutes without reply, they decided to go closer to investigate, they were met by a shadowy giant, brandishing his rifle by the muzzle. He ran right through them, leaving in his wake a militiaman with a smashed head. In the night the huge fellow seemed like some great bear, leaping about clumsily and erratically. As he ran, bounding like a grotesque ballet-dancer, Pedro sent a carefully-aimed bullet through his body, and he fell to earth in a heap. The militiamen ran up, and there they found him, in his death throes. His hairy, heaving chest was arrayed with religious medals. His powerful hands clutched at the earth.

"Damn you all, you dogs!" he cursed. Jimenez spurned him with his foot, thrust his pistol on the back of the thick neck and fired. They left him stretched out, biting the grass.

On the top of his head the unkempt tonsure of a priest was still visible.

The two wounded militiamen were left in the care of the Revolutionary Committee at a nearby village, and the rest at once set off uphill to the sierras. They saw that the only place from which the signals could have come was a sanatorium for consumptives. All the patients capable of being removed had been evacuated and only the more serious cases remained. Sometimes, during the rebel attacks, bombs had exploded on the building. It had even happened that, when the artillery was very strong, and it was thought that the legionaries and the Moors might arrive at any moment, some poor devils who were anti-Fascist had managed to summon enough strength to crawl out of bed and disappear into the night. They made the woods re-echo with their coughing, leaving behind them bloody splashes, which marked the ground like grim poppies of death. In the sanatorium there remained only those patients who were in open sympathy with the Fascists and did not fear, but hoped, for the arrival of the rebel troops, and a few others, Fascist and anti-Fascist, to whom death from bullets or bombs would come as a welcome relief.

Among these poor wretches who, lying in the wards

of the sanatorium, had nothing but death to wait for, the spirit of civil war, incredible though it may seem, was perhaps even more bitter than outside. Impassioned outbursts of insults were hurled from bed to bed in an insane battle. Taking advantage of their condition, and knowing that they were sentenced to relentless death, they ignored all efforts to control them. One of them, who had hidden a rebel flag under his mattress, brought it out, and waved it madly, shouting "Arriba España!" when seized by the crisis of his affliction. Many of his fellow patients, with opposite political views, writhed in their beds in a frenzy of impotent rage, shouting for the militiamen to come and shoot him. The only nurse remaining in the sanatorium was a Sister of Mercy, Sor Maria, who by this time had become "Comrade Maria," a member of the Communist party, as could be seen by the badge she was wearing. She exhausted herself vainly going from bed to bed trying to pacify the political fury, the class hatred of those miserable sufferers. When the militiamen entered the sanatorium one of the ghostly inmates shouted to them in a crazy outburst:

"There he is! He is a Fascist! Kill him!"

Jimenez went to the bed, pacifying him with a gesture, and asked:

"Have you noticed anything? Have any signals been made from here with a light?"

"Yes, yes! He has got a torch under his mattress! Kill him, I say, so that I may die in peace!"

Jimenez went to the bed of the Fascist who, with his brow bathed in cold sweat, and his head sunk into his pillow, had been looking at him askance.

"Get up!"

The man did not stir. They pushed him to one side of the bed, and under the mattress they found a yellow-and-red monarchist flag and an electric torch. "Does this belong to you?" asked Jimenez from the foot of the bed.

"Yes, they are mine. What of it?" shouted the patient, sitting up with a jerk. Jimenez's answer was to take careful aim and discharge the contents of his pistol into the frail frame of bones and skin. It collapsed in a heap.

"Thanks, comrade," came the voice from the opposite bed. "Now I shall be able to die in peace."

The speaker turned his face to the wall and, pulling the bedclothes around him, fell back exhausted.

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Beyond the hill on which the sanatorium stood, many signs of active warfare were to be seen. Ammunition stores were dotted about, several broken guns were piled in a heap, troops were busy bringing up material for a big offensive, and shell holes scarred the earth, while a wrecked lorry lay at the bottom of one of them. There, about a kilometre beyond the foot of the incline, were the first Fascist outposts. Jimenez, followed by his men, saw a number of artillery men drawing big guns into position near the sanatorium.

He went over to the officer in charge, and spoke to him.

The officer replied:

"It is impossible for spies to be here, right in our front line. Those signals of which you speak have not been noticed by us, perhaps because they are sent from hill to hill over our heads."

"Surely there must be a last link, even in these lines?" insisted Jimenez.

"You are welcome to continue your investigations," said the officer, "but be careful, because the front line here is complicated and extremely dangerous, and you may easily stray into enemy territory."

Jimenez and his men, nevertheless, went on with their search. As they advanced the sentries stressed more and more the risks they were taking, until at last one of them gave the warning:

"From here you are liable to run into the enemy at any moment." Jimenez was not to be deterred.

He had seen, in the distance, near the valley, a faint light, and was determined to get it at all costs.

"There, there are the last traitors," he shouted. "We are not going to let Fascist bullets stop us from putting an end to them. We must get at the very root of the trouble," he repeated in his obsession.

The militiamen began to hesitate, fearing danger from the enemy trenches.

"We must get the traitors," repeated Jimenez, "even if we have to snatch them from under Franco's nose."

He jumped from boulder to boulder down the hill, followed closely by Pedro who, clutching his rifle, and clenching his teeth, was straining his eyes into the darkness where Jimenez affirmed that the light could be seen. The other militiamen had by now deserted them. Jimenez, noticing this, turned to Pedro and cursed them.

"The cowards and murderers, all they can do is kill women and children, I will have them shot, the whole bunch of them!"

Mad with fury he advanced half-blinded, his spectacles dimmed by the morning mists. Believing still that he saw the little light, he was enticed onwards, but the light somehow seemed to recede farther and farther. Pedro, behind him like a faithful dog, saw the first streaks of dawn beginning to chase away the ghosts of night.

"Can you see the light?" Pedro kept panting.

"Yes, there it is, over there!" came the answer from Jimenez, who had not stopped running. Suddenly they found themselves in a clearing, at the end of which there certainly was a silvery light. Was it the last link of the chain, or was it the Morning Star?

"There! there!" shouted Jimenez, dashing into the clearing. A semi-circle of flame burst forth at the far end and, as the mountains re-echoed the roar of the volley, Jimenez and Pedro doubled up at the knees and felt the dew of the dawn on the grass, first on their hands, then on their faces. Jimenez lay with wide-open

eyes which held for eternity the image of a distant light.

Pedro, his life's blood flowing from him, felt sleep stealing over him with a sensation of serene contentment. He nestled into the grass cooled by the morning dew. . . . How difficult it was to find rest in war and revolution, but now, how deeply he would sleep. . . .

THE IRON COLUMN

DRUNK as a lord, he threw himself over the side of the box and shouted something that no one understood. Three cheers for the English mister," screamed a pretty girl who was in the box next to him and who appeared to be as drunk as the man himself. Everyone turned to look at them. "Three cheers!" echoed some condescending spectators.

The Englishman, very calm, smiling broadly, addressed the amused public and continued to talk in his own language, making histrionic gestures. A storm of shouts, hand-clapping, stamping of feet and cat calls drowned his pleasant voice. With a smile on his lips and blushing like a poppy he withstood the turmoil he had unwittingly started and, when he saw that he could not dominate the general din, he lifted his left fist in the manner of the reds and shouted: "Three cheers for the Republic! . . . Hip, hip, hip. . . ." The noise increased. The crowd that filled the music-hall to overflowing howled like wild creatures. When the clamour had subsided a little a woman's shoe whizzed across the auditorium like a projectile straight at the head of the Englishman who, with the skill of a fielding cricketer, caught it in the air, looked at it for a moment with intense surprise and then, with a

clumsy gesture half-gallant and half-joking, raised it to his lips. The crowd laughed gaily. The small orchestra put a sudden end to the din made by the audience by starting to play the *International* with tremendous verve and the pretty girl who now stood behind the Englishman caught him round the neck with her bare arm and pulled him backwards into her box. As he fell against her and she tried to support him and prevent him from falling, she kissed him, pushed him into a seat, and gave him a glass of whisky. He remained quiet and still, with an expression of intense happiness in his clear blue eyes. The show went on. Variety artists—girls with ugly voices and pretty figures sang atrociously . . . and they sang stark naked. The public did not allow them to wear a single garment—not even an ornament. If one of the girls appeared with the flimsiest of veils the crowd screamed her away. They had paid to see flesh and flesh they would have. The only girls allowed to wear anything were the Andalusian dancers, for the mob realized that the dancers of the fiery gestures and tragic postures merited the dignity of their traditional attire without which the boleros, fandangos, seguidillas and all the rest of the typical Andalusian and gipsy dances would lose their charm and meaning. So this was the only act permitted to escape the humiliation of public nudity. There was also a turn where an effeminate creature dressed as a woman sang the most heart-rending Andalusian love-songs with pathetic tremolos. His face was

plastered with whitewash and rouge and his mincing manners and the oriental sumptuousness of his dress brought to mind the exotic unreality of the actors of the Japanese theatre. With the exception of these concessions to the taste for passion and tragedy which was undoubtedly felt by the emotional levantine element in the audience, the spectacle of the music-hall was kept going, thanks to the most primitive and ingenuous salacity.

A small red-headed woman appeared on the stage, singing an indecent song and at the same time pretending to be ashamed of her nakedness, swaying and crouching with feline gestures; at the back of the auditorium there were signs of restlessness and commotion. Was it some drunken militiamen indulging in a brawl or perhaps someone trying to slip out without paying for his drinks? Or one of the cabaret artistes disputing with her beau? The crowd took no notice and the female who resembled a pussy-cat prowling about the stage went on with her singing. The commotion however increased and some of the audience began to get frightened and left.

Then, from the back of the house, a shot rang out, sounding like a metallic ring on a marble-topped table, and it was followed by the rumbling of a volley. People jumped up and began to run in all directions, panic-stricken. The orchestra stopped playing in the middle of a bar and the naked girl on the stage appeared still more naked when the music ceased to afford her

the cover of its harmony. Whipping out their pistols and guns, a few determined men made for the entrance whilst the women ran about with shrill cries of terror. The most cowardly dived under the tables, and the waiters tried frantically to stop those who, taking advantage of the turmoil, were trying to leave without settling their bills. The Englishman, by this time still more intoxicated, was smiling broadly and, sprawling over the table covered with empty bottles, fondling the girl on his knees.

The shooting outside increased in intensity. Bullets piercing the frail door leading into the auditorium whistled in every direction. A man with his hands pressed against his stomach stumbled towards the stage amongst the tables and, after taking a few steps, fell on his face in a pool of blood.

There followed a few moments of terrifying silence in which no one dared to move. A score of men waving rifles and pistols about their heads swept in like a tornado. One of them armed with a very business-like automatic pistol advanced alone to the centre of the auditorium, then, facing his men and casting a challenging look in all directions he lifted his clenched fist and shouted:

"Long live the Iron Column."

"Viva!" answered the coarse voices of the rest of the intruders.

The dramatic silence that ensued was broken by a phlegmatic voice saying calmly:

"Three cheers for the President of the Republic."

It seemed that the Englishman had at last begun to realize that something important was taking place for he was again leaning heavily over the box and shouting his favourite cry.

Was it that the newcomers had taken the words they could not understand as a provocation? Anyway, they aimed a shot at him. He heard the hiss of the bullet pass close to his head and, thrusting out his right hand, he snatched at the air as though he were trying to catch a fly and smiled as though they had only thrown a handful of confetti at him in a joke. The girl dragged him away from the edge of the box and pulled him down to the floor where she struggled with him until he consented not to get up and ask for more trouble.

Meanwhile, the militiamen of the Iron Column who had taken the music-hall by storm, ordered a couple of waiters to remove the wretched man who had been shot in the stomach and, carrying their enormous pistols, they swaggered about in their leather jackets and sheepskin caps until they had taken possession of the principal boxes, where they sprawled waiting to be entertained. The one who seemed to be the leader of the gang made himself very comfortable and, seated in the best box and surrounded by his seconds-in-command, he shouted at the leader of the small orchestra:

"Eh! you conductor! let us have some music!"

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In a few weeks the Iron Column had become a terror in all the Valencia region. These were about two hundred men who had deserted from the Huesca and Teruel fronts and were now over-running the villages of the province, pillaging and destroying with total impunity whatever came their way. Under the pretext of ridding the country of fascists in ambush these men went about the villages and hamlets killing and looting to their hearts' content, in the most brutal manner and without fear, for the police were powerless to cope with them.

In the ranks of the Iron Column there were ex-convicts who had enlisted under the red-and-black anarchist flag—scum of the earth emanating from the lowest dens of the Chinese quarter of Barcelona—most of whom had, at the beginning of the revolution, mixed themselves up with the masses of the people. They agitated for disorder and led the revolutionaries who organised the mad raids extending from Barcelona and Valencia to any part of the country where there was a suspicion of weakness in the ruthless drive to exterminate fascists, while actually their task consisted of nothing but looting defenceless villages. These bands were very active, especially when they joined up with others, but when they met the opposing troops they dispersed on the pretext of mopping up the territories behind the fighting line. The "bona fide" anarchist leaders, of which there were a good number, were faced with the organised resistance of these

bands and forced to renounce their principles of individual self-determination opposed to any kind of discipline and obedience to rank. Buenaventura Durruti, the anarchist leader who had left Barcelona for the front at the head of his followers, amongst whom were the dregs of the town, soon assumed the iron discipline of a dictator. In a few weeks he had his men under a relentless control more severe than in any regular army. The death penalty was always meted out to every man who failed to obey orders, showed lack of courage, or tried to desert. Durruti's pistol was always ready to threaten any of his comrades at the slightest sign of rebellion. If any one of them argued on anarchist lines that there was no authority to respect because each as a free man was at liberty to do as he liked, Durruti wrenched the rifle from his hands, took from him everything he possessed and, leaving him half-naked, showed him the road saying:

"Yes, you are a free man so go if you like. I take from you everything that the people have given you for their defence. There is the road, go! But take care, for there is always a stray bullet for traitors to the cause."

Few of those who deserted in this way ever reached their destination.

When he could see the ravages occasioned amongst his men by the fact that a great number of camp-followers were at the front following the militiamen, he made up his mind in a flash and had half a dozen of

them shot at dawn. After this the whole lot of degenerates, prostitutes, pickpockets and spies from Barcelona and Valencia disappeared as if by magic.

His iron hand soon put an end to the scourge and eliminated from the front all those who had gone there with the sole purpose of pillaging. Whole sections of the Government forces revolted openly against the rigorous discipline. One of these groups forming the ranks of the Iron Column had invaded the Valencia Music Hall on its way to plunder more villages and find fascists or other suspects to root out.

At the start they had numbered only a few dozen men armed with rifles but their ranks were soon increased as they were joined by the deserters and criminals of all kinds that roamed about the country. When they considered themselves strong enough they entered the town of Castellon where they overpowered and disarmed the Government forces, taking their weapons for their own use. Soon after that, they managed to get lorries, machine-guns, and even some armoured cars and thus armed dared to enter Valencia itself. Their unexpected presence in the provisional capital of the Republic produced a panic even amongst the loyal forces. The men of the Iron Column, finding themselves complete masters of Valencia, indulged for hours in plunder and depravity of the worst kind; ending by invading the music-halls and cabarets to amuse themselves with the women artistes and help themselves to the money from the box-offices.

If they met with any resistance they forced an entrance by killing, otherwise they were content to indulge their bestial instincts. Once established in the boxes of the music-hall and at their ease they commanded the show to continue and the waiters to serve all they wished to eat and drink. The terrorised women artistes tried to hide and run away but the men of the Iron Column, their passions craving for assuagement, prevented their escape and dragged them to their boxes where they handled them obscenely and made them drink while terrorising them still more with coarse words and filthy jokes. The public silently vanished from the music-hall and soon there remained only the Iron Column and the Englishman who was still accompanied by the brave girl who refused to abandon him in his helpless condition.

"Who is that fellow?" asked the leader who was called "El Chino" (the Chinaman) by his men, although they had no apparent reason for such a nickname.

"An English airman—a volunteer on leave from Albacete. He is having a good time with a pretty girl. . . . A half-baked fool who keeps on shouting for cheers for the President of the Republic in his own lingo," said the waiter.

"We must ask him to visit us and see what he has to say for himself," decided "The Chinaman." With that, he went over to where the Englishman sat and after saluting with clenched fist raised, he invited him to accompany him to his own box and

have a drink with his men. The Englishman accepted with great pleasure.

"And are you not coming with us my pretty one?" asked "The Chinaman," facing the girl.

"Allow me to introduce Señorita Pepita," said the Englishman in the most polite manner.

"Greetings."

"Greetings."

They took a long look at each other registering marked mutual dislike. The girl tried to dissuade her friend from going to drink with the militiamen.

"You cannot stand another drop, George," she told him in a peculiar mixture of English and Spanish. "You've had enough, don't be a fool."

"Mi no borracho . . . nada," affirmed the airman, trying to prove his words by performing feats of equilibrium.

"Let's go," he said, catching hold of "The Chinaman's" arm. "Come on, Pepita."

The girl reluctantly followed them to the box next to the stage where the militiamen were enjoying the suggestive dancing of a naked girl. One of the militiamen, nicknamed "El Negus" on account of his black beard, jumped over the edge of the stage box on to the boards, took the girl in his arms, and threw her from the stage on to a table full of bottles and glasses which the sprawling, terrified girl scattered in all directions. The Negus pulled her into the box and, grasping her round the waist, kissed her brutally and handled her

with rough indecency. She did not dare to resist but her eyes were full of tears and she was obviously about to collapse. The Englishman was looking on in astonishment and trying to understand through the barrage of dullness produced by his intoxication, when suddenly he reacted with a jerk and, catching the bearded satyr by the shoulder, pulled him round and delivered a neat blow straight from the shoulder plump in the middle of the bushy beard, sending him sprawling to the floor. There was a moment of suspense. . . . Pepita approached the Englishman as if ready to protect him. The Negus got up half-stunned and, fumbling in his belt for his gun, went straight for his aggressor. El Chino, realising the possibility of unnecessary trouble, aggravated by the fact that the Englishman was a foreigner, placed himself between the two men and tried to laugh the matter off.

"You must take some boxing lessons, Negus. . . . Be a sport and forget it. . . . You have been asking for it you know."

"I'll kill him. . . . I will. . . . Let me get at him."

"Don't be a fool, man. . . . He's a friend of ours. Is it not so, mister?"

"Oh, yes . . . of course," and the Englishman held out his hand to the Negus in such a frank and friendly manner that the bearded brute could not help shaking it with a forced smile.

"You do know how to hit, by Jove," said the "Chino." "You should come with us."

"Where?"

"To fight against the fascists . . . to exterminate them all. That is what you came from England to do, is it not? Well, then, join us and you will find that you have not made the journey for nothing."

"All right," answered the Englishman, laconically.

"Yes, I will fight the fascists and exterminate them."

"Three cheers . . ." cried the militiamen.

"And three cheers for the President of the Republic," the English aviator cried once more and then passed out, falling into the arms of Pepita, who now realised that she could no longer prevent him associating himself with the gangsters.

When the dawn broke, the militiamen half-carried him out and thrust him into one of the lorries waiting at the door. For a moment Pepita hesitated, torn between what she had to do and terror and despair, then, pulling her thin coat closely around her, she jumped into the lorry with them.

All the morning they bumped along the highway. George had fallen into a profound sleep. Pepita, shrinking into a corner and nodding drowsily, held the Englishman's head in her lap. She was aware through the mists of fatigue that veiled her consciousness that from time to time the lorry stopped at different places and that there were loud voiced disputes between the men of the Iron Column and those of the local Committees.

These expeditions of armed bandits were the scourge

of the country-side. On the pretext of cleaning up the villages they committed every kind of crime and abuse. Their excuse was that the militiamen and local Committees were not whole-hearted revolutionaries; the fascists were being sheltered and thus escaping the punishment they deserved. Above all, in the rich Valencia province the villages contained too many "petty bourgeois." They considered that the existence of this element alone was ample justification for their depredations and when they came up against the local authorities these were forced to give them all they demanded, either of arms, money or blood. Sometimes, though rarely, the authorities managed to get the upper hand, but at other times they succumbed to their menaces and brutality.

At midday they arrived at Benacil, a prosperous levantine village which was delightfully situated amidst orange-groves and palm-trees in a fertile valley. The local militiamen stopped the lorries and it was apparent that they were prepared to resist any interference. El Chino proceeded with caution to start negotiations, and the members of the Committee, mostly republicans and socialists, gathered round. "Pepet," the President of the Revolutionary Committee and an old republican, was adamant, and Tomas the secretary, a member of the Socialist youth movement, supported him, arguing with terse and typically marxist dialectic. They said that the village revolutionary loyalty was assured; that the fascists

of the place had been arrested long ago and were in the custody of the Committee; and that the local militiamen were responsible for law and order in the village and for carrying out the orders given by the Governor of the province. El Chino countered by insisting emphatically that he was carrying out orders from the front and demanded that all arms should be surrendered to him; that the fascist prisoners be placed under the vigilance of his men; and argued that the local Committee and the local militiamen were to help him clean up the village and hunt out suspects of every kind. In spite of all their assurances, he insisted that he must see for himself that all was in order.

The discussion came to a deadlock, but meanwhile the Iron Column men were cunningly manœuvring unobserved, to positions behind the parapets and other defences erected by the local militiamen; thus, when the discussion was still going on, the latter found themselves trapped from the rear and confronted by rifles and machine-guns. The other men of the Iron Column were already busy removing the barriers across the road and had restarted the engines of the lorries ready to go ahead at all costs. El Chino then said to the members of the Committee:

"My men must go on with their revolutionary task and it is foolish of you to try and prevent them doing so. If you insist we shall consider you as enemies of the revolution and will act accordingly by treating you as so many fascists."

The villagers were forced eventually to submit and the lorries of the Iron Column rolled on victoriously into the village which gave the impression of being deserted. They stopped in front of the old palace belonging to the Marquis of Benacil and took uncere- monious possession of its magnificence.

During all this, the Englishman continued sleeping like a log in the lorry with Pepita seated next to him.

"What shall we do with this man of yours?" asked one of the militiamen busy unloading the lorry.

"Take him upstairs and put him to bed somewhere," answered the girl.

The militiaman picked up the English aviator as if he were handling a sack of potatoes and threw him on one of the soft beds in one of the palace bedrooms. Then, turning to Pepita with a lustful look in his eyes, he said:

"One of these days it will be my turn, eh? Well my pretty one . . . when is it going to be?"

He winked at her meaningly and left the room, shutting the door behind him. Pepita removed the Englishman's shoes, unbuttoned his collar, and covered him with a blanket, then, after closing the window and drawing the curtains, she curled herself up like a cat at the foot of the bed and fell asleep.

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The revolutionary Committee of Benacil met in the Town Hall to discuss the situation. Like most levantines

of the country-side they had been republicans all their lives and, having fought for their ideals, were not prepared to be told what to do by a band of desperadoes who had descended on them more like enemies than friends. The revolution was their business and they would not allow newcomers to tell them what to do.

"If we allow these bandits of the Iron Column to have their way, they will kill and loot, and the village will hold us responsible for the crimes they commit," said Pepet the old republican who presided at the meeting.

"We are helpless . . . they will do as they like," affirmed one of the disheartened members of the Committee.

"We must resist them at all costs. We must not let the control of the revolution out of our own hands," argued Tomas the young socialist in his impetuous way. "We must fight against the terrorism practised by these armed gangs of murderers who have deserted from the front like cowards. . . . We must exterminate them as we have exterminated fascism."

"Yes, but meanwhile, as you see, we are helpless. We know what has happened in the villages visited by these bandits. . . . The horrors they have committed have caused the villagers to turn fascist as a natural reaction. . . . These gangsters are Franco's best publicity agents and I have seen how real republicans and true democrats have cursed the

revolution and have expressed their desire for the triumph of fascism," replied Pepet.

"The horror of the war produces this kind of reaction on the other side as well. The crimes committed by the phalangists have changed many conservatives into revolutionaries and sent them over to the Government side, I assure you. Six months more of this inferno and you will see how the great majority of the revolutionaries of to-day will have become reactionaries, but by then Franco will only be left with paid murderers to fight for his cause. The towns that sided with him at the start will hope for a liberal régime and for the terror, under which they now suffer so horribly, to stop."

"All you say is theoretical and imaginative. What really matters now is to prevent this horde from desecrating the village. I, for my part, rather than give way to them, will shut myself up in my house to await the moment for Franco's troops to come and get me," said Pepet.

"I will do as you say, Pepet!"

"And I."

"And I."

The republicans, the democrats, the liberals, were all ready to withdraw from taking any further part in the whole business. Tomas, the secretary, tried to make them regain their faith. To funk the fight, however hard and ferocious it might be, was cowardice, and suicide in the long run. War and revolution were like

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that and they had to be faced in all their horrors. They would have to fight the bandits of the Iron Column. In the village and surrounding district there were courageous men in plenty to face them and if that was not enough they would ask for government reinforcements which surely could not be refused. Anything was better than to give way to the intruders.

Before the day was over the revolutionary Committee had devised a plan. Pepet and the other republican leaders drafted concentration orders to be delivered to the peasants of the district by runners who would sprint to their respective destinations along the paths that wound their way across orange-groves and through rich fields. The alarm would soon be raised in the lonely cottages and out-lying hamlets. The paths and roads leading to Benacil would then be filled with peasants of the "huertas" who, with their blunderbusses and sharp scythes, would hurry to defend what they called "their" Republic—that ideal republican régime of which they had been dreaming for generations and which was now in danger from reactionaries and extremists of both sides. The old democratic creed still had its defenders.

Meanwhile Tomas had gathered round him in the socialist club of Benacil groups of young socialists and communists and was addressing them with a great flow of eloquence, urging them to fight those who, though they had declared themselves allies, were very dangerous enemies. It was a difficult task to convince

these men that it was their duty to fight against men who, after all, were proletarians like themselves. The idea penetrated very slowly to their narrow minds, prejudiced as they were by revolutionary inclinations. But communistic discipline and fanaticism worked marvels. They would fight the false revolutionaries of the Iron Column with the same ardour as they were fighting the fascists. The intruders were nothing more than gangsters and enemies of the dictatorship of the proletariat and that was reason enough for them to be exterminated.

But the men of the Iron Column were not remaining idle while the revolutionary committee was busy gathering its hosts and spreading them out in strategical positions. El Chino, accompanied by his second-in-command, called at the local gaol at dusk and ordered all fascist prisoners to be brought out and given over to him. Pepet and Tomas heard this was going on and hastened to the prison.

"What do you want the prisoners for?" asked Tomas.

"To apply to them the revolutionary justice you have not been able to apply yourselves," answered El Chino.

With the prison surrounded by his men and three or four of his most courageous partisans with him in the court-yard, Tomas felt strong.

"The only authority here is that of the Committee," he insisted.

"To hell with all authority and all your comic Committees. The only will to be respected here is the

will of the people and in the name of the people we shall shoot the fascist prisoners or, if we like, we shall free them as we, who represent the people, shall decide! Understand?"

"We know the game. . . . What you want to do is to shoot those that cannot pay a ransom and free those that can give you plenty of pesetas. . . . How much money have you made that way, you low-down scum?"

At that El Chino sprang at his throat but Tomas, on the alert, managed to shake him off and, snatching his pistol from his belt with a swift movement, kept him and the others covered. He then turned to his men and said:

"Hurry up! . . . Call the militiamen and put these bandits in jail."

El Chino and his men, trapped as they were, could not prevent the militiaman starting on his errand, but one of them whistled sharply and in a few moments another lot of gangsters arrived and, realising what was happening, attacked and disarmed Pepet and Tomas.

"So you were going to make me a prisoner were you!" said El Chino, who was now doing the threatening and poking them in the ribs with his pistol.

"Understand! . . . I will have you all shot now as traitors and anti-revolutionaries."

He ordered one of his men to handcuff them and took the necessary precautions to withstand the imminent attack of the Benacil militiamen who at any moment would be on the spot.

Things moved quickly. The first to arrive were a

patrol of fifteen to twenty men who, faced with a couple of well-aimed volleys, fled in every direction.

El Chino, not wishing to lose any time, ordered the bulk of his men to confine their efforts to defending the prison and to see that the lorries were adequately defended and ready with their engines running. He then told his seconds in command to go into the prison and round up the fascist prisoners and put them in the lorries, as he had made up his mind to take them with him should he be forced to retreat.

When the first batch of prisoners came out El Chino asked them a few hurried questions, but firing started in the vicinity of the prison. The Benacil militiamen were hurrying in bands to free their leaders.

El Chino kept calm. . . . "The idiots!" he commented . . . "all they will achieve is to get themselves killed."

But things were not going so smoothly as all that for El Chino and his band. The Benacil militiamen were fighting bravely and they had quickly organised the siege of the prison. The bulk of the Iron Column, some hundred and fifty men, was gathered round El Chino but they could not cope with their assailants and the affair began to take on the proportions of a real battle.

The fascists were in mortal fear. They had no idea of what was happening but they guessed that their lives were in jeopardy and that this was the real issue of the fight. Those that had been released were already

trying to escape in the confusion and the rest kept banging on the doors of their cells shouting in hysterical frenzy. The Iron Column gangsters invaded the prison galleries, pushed the men into corners with blows from the butts of their rifles, and took cover as best they could, firing from the doors and windows against the armed villagers. A couple of girls dressed in corduroy trousers and leather jackets were urging the men forward and the pressure of the attackers was so great that El Chino and his followers were overwhelmed and, like the cowards they were, they retreated in disorder, seeking safety in the offices and various rooms of the prison.

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The distant noise of the volleying finally succeeded in waking George, who was astonished to find himself where he was, and alone. He saw that he was in a magnificent palace, but it took him a long time to realise what had happened to him, nor had he the remotest idea how he had got there. The persistent noise of the battle in progress made him jump up and when his brain cleared enough for him to understand, he ran downstairs and out of the palace in the direction of the firing. In the street he saw other men running in the same direction. He called to one of them and asked:

“What is happening?”

The man, a rough peasant armed with an old

sporting gun, was hurrying to the fight to defend “his” republic, and although not very clear as to what sort of enemy he was going to meet, he answered abruptly:

“They are trying to storm the prison to get hold of the fascist prisoners.”

“But who is attacking the prison?”

“A band of fascist murderers.”

“But how did fascists manage to get to this village?”

“I’m damned if I know that,” answered the man, starting to run again.

The English aviator was by now absolutely non-plussed and when he got near to the prison he saw groups of militiamen firing against the Iron Column invaders. Still unable to understand the situation, he recognised the militiamen by their blue overalls and concluded that the “fascist bandits” had somehow managed to take possession of the prison where they had gone to rescue their friends.

He took his pistol and joined the militiamen. Had he not volunteered to fight fascism? Were not those that had taken possession of the prison, fascists? Well then! . . . he considered himself “in action” and soon he was in the first line of the fight.

The moment for storming the prison had arrived. The enemy had to be ejected or else they would kill the prisoners. A voice dominating the turmoil was heard shouting:

“Volunteers, get out of cover and go to the prison gates and keep those swine at bay from there!”

Half a dozen young men came forward and George joined them.

"Where are you going with that toy?" asked a militiaman who seemed to be commanding the men. . . . "Take this rifle and throw away your comic gun!"

"But I do not know how to use that kind of rifle."

The man gave George a rapid demonstration.

"Oh, I see . . . it's easy," said the Englishman and joined the other volunteers who were getting ready to take up a position of great danger.

They waited for the right moment and, running at the double and bent over so as to minimise their height, they left the corner of the street where they were taking cover and started to cross the open space in front of the prison under a terrific spurt of fire from El Chino's men.

The assailants were shooting from the hip as they ran. George tried to do the same. He pressed the trigger but apparently he had not grasped properly the way to use that ancient rifle. At that very moment the door of the prison was flung wide open and a gush of machine-gun fire played havoc amongst the volunteers. The Englishman threw away the useless weapon and, remembering his best rugger days, charged headlong into the black hole made by the frame of the door from which death was spurting forth. He was the only one to reach the goal, the others were brought down by bullets. He entered the vestibule and fell up against the machine-gunners. One of them who was about

to brain him with a piece of iron recognised him and exclaimed:

"Well ! . . . If it is not that damned English fellow we brought from Valencia! !"

A couple of men then seized him by the arms and, struggling furiously, he was taken into the presence of El Chino.

"What is your little game, you fool?" El Chino asked.

George, who was surprised to find himself amongst his friends of the night before and equally surprised to find that he had been unwittingly fighting against them, replied:

"I was fighting the fascists."

"The fascists? . . . Those outside are the fascists!"

He shook his head refusing to believe it and they tried to convince him in vain. They left him alone. They could not waste their time explaining things to that madman—they could not even spare the seconds that it would take to kill him. George was fed up with being unable to understand what had become of the enemy he had volunteered to fight. In future he would not risk his life until he knew for certain whom he was fighting for an why. He adopted a philosophical frame of mind and drifted about the interior of the prison to await the end of the commotion. On reaching the first floor of the building, far away from the battle, he heard footsteps and hid against a door. A small group of fascist prisoners, taking advantage of the reigning confusion to make their escape, were tip-toeing about

in search of a good exit. In front of them stood a girl wearing an overall—the uniform of the militiamen. In her right hand she carried a gun.

George, still hiding behind the door, did not speak. He was going to be careful in future. . . . He followed the group at a distance and heard Pepita, for it was she, telling them to hide behind the columns of the patio and to wait there until the assailants could force an entrance so that they could get mixed up in the scramble and escape as best they could.

“Arriba España,” said a fascist in a low voice and the girl, turned and went back along the corridor. George caught her by the waist and said with great emotion:

“You have been grand, doing your best to spare the lives of those wretched fellows. I have an idea that they are some of the fascist prisoners but, nevertheless, you have done the right thing in trying to save them from assassination. You and I at least prefer to fight them cleanly, face to face.”

Pepita, fearing that George might “put his foot in it,” because he obviously did not understand the situation, entreated him to say nothing to anyone of what he had seen.

“Of course I understand,” said George reassuring her. “Things are beginning to be clear to me. That is why I think you have been splendid, trying to save them.”

They then joined the group formed by El Chino and

his seconds-in-command. As soon as Pepita was amongst the Iron Column men she completely changed her attitude and again began to urge the men to fight, using exalted words mixed with oaths.

Things were not going too well for the intruders, but El Chino was a very shrewd man. He decided it was time to fight his way back to the lorries. It was now out of the question to think about interfering with the fascist prisoners. The only thing that mattered was to escape from the trap in which they found themselves. To distract the attention of the main body of the attackers he ordered that the bars of one of the windows of the prison, furthest from the main entrance should be torn down so as to give the impression that the escape had been attempted that way, and meanwhile, he was concentrating his men to get away by the main entrance. When the moment arrived, he gave the signal and they rushed into the open with desperate determination. In the vanguard there were four men with Lewis machine-rifles who made a barrage of continuous fire. A huge man followed, carrying a machine-gun supported against his enormous chest and bulky abdomen and he kept firing his weapon as he went. This rapid and decisive sortie took the armed villagers by surprise and the Iron Column men managed to break through to the place where they had left the lorries. The men they had left there to protect them had already started the engines.

The group that had left the prison in that desperate

plight carried with them Pepet and Tomas. They had them well secured with handcuffs and ropes and, whenever possible, they exposed them to the bullets of their own people in order to protect themselves. The fascist prisoners who had escaped through Pepita's help had managed to get away in the general confusion. . . .

The lorries started off, but unknowingly they were on their way to more trouble, glad though they were to see the lights of Benacil disappearing in the distance. A few bullets like a parting gift from the militiamen whizzed past. El Chino took stock of his men. The casualties were few, considering the gruelling adventure. . . . Some twenty men dead and wounded. Psh . . . the Iron Column had managed to escape after all. . . . Forward!

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Before dawn they stopped about thirty miles from Benacil. George, who was seated next to Pepita on the bottom of one of the lorries, suggested they should stretch their legs along the road. They would ask the lorries to stop and pick them up. He wanted to be alone with the girl and have a good talk. There were so many things he could not understand! . . . Pepita, absorbed in her own thoughts, crouching with her elbows on her knees and her head resting in the palms of her hands, looked at him with her feverish eyes full of compassion and, without answering a word, jumped

out and started to walk along the road. George followed her.

For a time they were silent. He did not know how to begin to tell her what he wished and felt. Her behaviour had been so strange in so many ways. How was it that, in spite of having fought with the courage of an amazon for the Iron Column, she had also helped the fascists to escape? George attributed this to a womanly sentiment of generous compassion and in that belief he wanted to reassure her that he understood and approved of her noble impulse. He broke the strained silence by saying what he was thinking:

"In spite of my hatred for fascists I would have done the same as you," he whispered in her ear.

At that she looked at him straight in the eyes and with a hostile ring in her voice, replied:

"And how do you know that I hate the fascists?"

George, taken unawares and not knowing what to reply to that, kept silent.

"I don't hate them, do you understand?" she said, and began to pour forth a torrent of passionate words—"Because I am one of them. . . . Do you hear? . . . ¡Arriba España! What you so proudly call "the people" are nothing but a rabble of murderers. . . . You are welcome to them. You have volunteered to fight for them. You think that romantic I suppose! You had better learn what kind of criminals you are risking your life for. You like them, eh? . . . I too find them marvellous. But from a different angle. I am not so

stupid as to believe that such scum would ever fight to redeem Humanity. All they can do and will ever do is to kill and plunder. But I find them wonderful because unconsciously, by their vileness, they will put an end to the idealistic illusions of those like you who still believe that "the people," the republic, the democracy, are such noble creatures with such grand ideals. Their crimes will ultimately provoke a ruthless reaction in favour of fascism. I don't believe in the people, nor in the brute power of the masses. I believe in nothing but real heroes, in men who know how to command and enforce obedience, in men capable of doing their duty as they see it. I believe in real leaders. I believe in fascism and in the military caste. My father was a soldier and he died in North Africa fighting for king and country. . . . My brothers, all three of them, are officers in Franco's army and . . . as to myself. . . ." She stopped short at that and then, in a dull and hopeless voice, said:

"I made up my mind to ruin you, to let you be lost. I picked you for an easy prey. I waited in the music-hall until you were completely drunk so as to get all the information I wanted from you. . . . But then . . . I too am a fool." She smiled wanly. "I took pity on you . . . you see . . . I couldn't help it. You are . . . you are . . . a nice fellow, decent, clean, and such a big baby. I couldn't . . . and now that you know . . . go quickly before it is too late for both of us."

They were walking slowly up-hill. The clear skies of a new day were vanquishing the last shadows. The girl averted her sorrowful face so as to avoid the eyes of the man.

"Go, please go. At first I thought you were nothing but another adventurer and I hoped that I would be able to convince you and make you desert. But now I know you better and I won't deceive you . . . I can't. . . . I wish to God we had never met. I know that you are stupidly sincere and really believe in the cause you are defending. . . . Last night when I saw that, without taking any notice of me, you decided to join those bandits I came with you, thinking that their crimes would disgust you so that you would leave them and join my side. But I know that you cannot be a traitor even though your end will be the same as that which is awaiting those two fools that El Chino brought with him from Benacil in the lorries. The rabble—the "people" you love so much—will assassinate you, too, one of these fine days. That is why you must escape now."

"Yes, I understand. . . . I will go. . . . But you, you must come with me. Pepita. . . . Come with me. I will marry you and take you away from all this horror of killing and filth that I see is all this war stands for. Let us forget it all . . . our love will wash away these foul memories. Come with me, Pepita!" He tried to take her in his arms, but she resisted and shook her head.

"If I went with you I would be a traitress to my cause. You must go your way and I must go mine. You cannot betray your side any more than I can betray mine. Go!"

"But what will you do amongst the people?"

"I will urge them on to more horrors. I will fan their vile instincts. Their crimes will swell the ranks of my friends the fascists. I serve my cause by staying with these gangsters. Now you can leave them and go . . . to serve your side."

George caught the girl by the arm and, roused to a rage by her words, said:

"For that I should kill you this moment, which is what you deserve! . . . You obstinate little fool!"

She looked at him coldly.

"Then you would be one more murderer amongst murderers. . . ."

Before they could say more the lorries had overtaken them and pulled up. A militiaman extended a hand and Pepita quickly jumped on to the back of the lorry which moved on and gathered speed, leaving George standing by the side of the road. Pepita never looked round nor made a gesture of good-bye. He sank down on a heap of stones by the roadside and rested his head on his hands. Pepita . . . the foolhardy, brave, lovely, Pepita of the calm deep eyes was gone . . . as were also gone the lorries which had left nothing but a cloud of dust.

The militiaman who had helped Pepita to jump into

lorry was the one who had spoken to her before in a meaningful and obvious manner

"What have you done with your English beau?" he asked.

"Oh, he got on my nerves . . . he bored me. It was best to leave him behind."

"Quite right my pretty one. He was getting on everybody's nerves. . . ."

He placed his hand on her knee. The girl looked at him full in the face with a strange flame in the back of her eyes. With loathing in her heart she smiled back at the man who squared his shoulders and thought he had made a hit and was a devil of a fellow.

When the last rumble of the lorries had died away George passed a weary hand across his feverish forehead. He felt a mad desire to start running after them. He experienced a wild pang of anguish as though something of himself was leaving him, with that girl. But he resisted the foolish impulse and, with an heroic effort, pulled himself together and made his way slowly back to Benacil. At the place where the lorries had halted he saw the bodies of two men. They had been shot in the back but their hands were clasped fraternally as in a final understanding.

The Government had decided at last to put an end to the crimes of these desperadoes. As other means had been tried and had failed it was at last decided to attack them from the air. Knowing this, George

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offered his services eagerly. He was given command of an air squad and on one of their sorties he saw a long line of lorries and swooped down on them to make sure of their identity. When that was established he signalled the two other pilots and the three of them unloaded their bombs in the middle of them. Once more he flew over the lorries that had obviously been hit and trained his machine-gun on the men who were running for their lives, mowing them down ruthlessly. Soaring in order to turn again and for the last time, he flew so low that he almost touched with his wings the tops of the two vehicles that were still standing unharmed. It was then that he saw standing unmoved and defiant the frail and delicate silhouette of a woman dressed in a militiaman's blue overall. She had not run away like the rest. Was it . . . could it be Pepita?

As the last spurt of fire from his machine-gun was loosed and before he could realise exactly what was happening—so quickly was it done—with an icy pang at his heart that was like death itself, he saw the valiant figure topple over and fall in the middle of the dust-covered, deserted road. . . . She fell face upward and to his tortured mind he seemed to see her proud lips move and form the words "Arriba España!"

THE GRANDEE'S CAVALIERS

THE horses were ready, and Currito, the Marquis's groom had his work cut out to hold them. The four young colts, of pure Andalusian stock, were nervous, and impatiently pawed the cobblestones of the patio striking sparks with their hooves. They were curry-combed to a polished sleekness. Their eyes rolling wildly, their ears pricked, they tossed their heads foaming at the bit with excitement to be gone. Across each saddle a rifle was slung.

From the top of one of the buildings a bell called to Mass. In the farm labourers' quarters, near the big house, men in broad brimmed sombreros, holding sporting guns across their legs, sat about on the stone seats holding their mounts, waiting until the family had finished prayers.

In the house, the Marquis rose from his wing chair, to stand or kneel, his noble head bowed at those moments in the service which prescribed humility. At his right hand sat aunt Conchita and behind him, stiff as buckram, his three sons, Jose Antonio, Juan Manuel, and Rafaelito, three splendid specimens of youth and manhood. They wore short tight-fitting white jackets, leather chaps and silver spurs, and as they sat there they fidgeted with the riding crops which

they held in their well-cared-for hands.

Father Frasquito went to and fro in the dining-room where the family always congregated for prayer, making the ritual gestures before a niche in the thick wall where there was a portable altar which Joselito, the sacristan, brought out before breakfast and put away after the meal was served. Standing apart from the family, at the other end of the huge room, were Don Felipe, the bailiff; the foreman, Montoya and the steward, Heredia. Through the service shutter leading to the kitchen the heads of the old cook and two young maid-servants kept peeping like inquisitive birds, for they were eager to catch a few murmurs of the priest's prayers and blessings. A long spiral of blue smoke from the censer, pierced by a ray of sunlight, perfumed the air with incense.

The amens and benedictions over, the women went back to their work; Joselito busied himself putting the room in order, moving the altar and the censers and extinguishing the candles; and the Marquis and his three sons donned their broad-brimmed hats with chin straps and went out into the patio where Jose Antonio, the eldest son, helped his father to mount. On one side waiting for orders were the forty men forming a posse with their farm horses and sporting guns. The two gamekeepers who were responsible for all order on the estate moved about giving final instructions. The Marquis on his horse supervised the formation of the cavalcade. His sons formed his escort whilst the

foreman and the steward, his lieutenants, rode back and forth to see all was in readiness. At the last moment Don Frasquito the padre and aunt Conchita came out of the house to see them off. In the background the women servants watched them go, amidst a chorus of murmurings and restrained weeping.

The seventy-year-old aunt Conchita was the only woman of the illustrious family remaining on the estate. The daughters and daughters-in-law of the Marquis had gone, some to Biarritz, others to Cascaes and Gibraltar, before the start of the war. But aunt Conchita who feared neither man nor devil had refused to leave.

"Well, Don Frasquito, don't you want to go with them?"

"There is nothing I would like better than to go red-devil hunting but I don't think I ought to, you see . . . on account of my calling."

"And what of it! . . . You should not be too particular at such times. Why not decide quickly and go with them? If the reds get you they will not think twice of cutting your throat."

At this gibe the priest took action. He called for a sporting gun and a cartridge belt which he fastened over his cassock, changed his birreta for a broad-brimmed hat and sprung smartly to the saddle of the nag brought forward for him.

"No one shall say that Don Frasquito, because he

is a padre, fears either reds or blacks," he said, and rode forward.

The Marquis turned in the saddle to look at his little troop who were already moving off. He would have liked to have addressed them with some eloquent words, but he could not trust himself to do so and contented himself with a gesture and the shout of "Viva España!"

"And long live La Virgen del Rocio, our revered Patroness," added Don Frasquito.

The Marquis' horsemen replied with cheers and much waving of hats. The two guards, well in advance and alert in their task of scouting, formed the van; then rode the three sons of the Marquis in a group with the foreman and the steward. Behind them came the Marquis with the padre on his right and the bailiff on his left, followed by Currito the groom and "Oselito" the sacristan, on foot. The rest of the men rode at a little distance, they were mainly cattle herders, shepherds and tillers of the soil, bred and born under the shadow of the estate.

The Marquis, the padre and the bailiff were talking together.

"General Queipo de Llano," the Marquis was saying, "telephoned me to ask me if I was ready to do my share as he was sure to be able to free all my territory of reds, (the Marquis possessed thousands of acres which included many small villages).

"Yesterday afternoon hundreds of Moors and as

many Foreign Legionaries left Seville armed with machine guns. They are under the command of Captain Dorado, who has the reckless courage of a charging boar and he will mop up the reds along the main roads as far as the boundary of the Huelva province. I have undertaken the task of cleaning up this territory and am not turning back until we join forces with Dorado and his men.

"The Malagueño (a famous bull-fighter) has also left Seville with his troop of the best horsemen of the Sevillian aristocracy and the toreadors, picadors and banderilleros of his cuadrilla, all of whom are as courageous as El Malagueño himself and capable of coping with the most vicious of bulls or, if need be, with the most venomous of the Popular Front leaders. I think that after the Moors and Legionaries went, three or four lorries with forty or fifty lads of the fascist party must have left Seville as well. We are going to give the reds a thorough clean up. Not one of them will be left alive in this province when we have done with them."

As a matter of fact no reds were to be seen. In the deserted country lanes there was scarcely a soul, except perhaps an old man or woman who, at the sight of the troops, would either hasten indoors or stand at attention and give the fascist salute.

"They are the peasants," commented the bailiff, "who clenched their fists at us when we went about our business on the estate. The very same who used

to steal the Señor Marquis' cattle or, if they could not get away with the animals, hamstringing them. They kept on threatening to do the same to us and that one day they would cut our throats too. The masses, the common people, have always behaved in the same way. Give them an inch and they will soon take an ell, but if you show them who is master they humble themselves to the dust. Since God made this world the only form of effective government has been the big stick. The candid republicans refused to understand this. . . ."

Round white clouds drifted along the blue of the skies, keeping pace with the slow progress of the troop. The deserted country-side was flat and treeless and, as far as the eye could see, not a single building or hillock was visible. At the head of the horsemen the three sons of the Marquis kept up a conversation with the foreman and the steward.

"I wonder how many reds there are about this part of the province?" asked Rafaelito, the youngest son, a nice lad very popular with everybody, specially with the old retainers in the family service.

"Not very many, Rafaelito, unless the Rio Tinto miners have come to reinforce them. The fact is that the peasants roundabout who have joined the reds are not very numerous. To be frank, however, those that have joined the reds are the best men."

"What do you mean . . . the best?" asked the steward with an angry note in his voice.

"Well . . . I mean the best men for a fight, the most rebellious, those that are most likely to risk their lives for an idea. Of course we do not lack brave men on our side, as, for instance, El Picao, El Sordito and El Lunaco that ride with us now."

"Pshaw! They are nothing but public-house bullies. Pray God, young master, that things go well for us. If the reds shoot the Marquis or one of you three young gentlemen it will not be so easy. You see, the reds fight for an ideal of their own and they give their lives willingly for that, but our men just act on the impulse of respect for you and your father. They obey you as their fathers and forefathers did. . . . Let us hope that nothing will happen to any of you."

"Who is the leader of the reds?" asked Rafaelito.

"Leader? . . . They let no one lead them. As far as I know it used to be 'El Maestrillo' of Carmona. You must remember him, Rafaelito, he was a declared communist, a school teacher."

"Julian?"

"Yes, that's his name. . . . I remember that you befriended him, didn't you?"

"Yes, we liked one another and got on well. I met him when we were both at Seville University."

"Well, this Julian and some mechanics who came from Seville to repair the tractors of the estate, stirred up the peasants with their revolutionary talk."

"My father was right," said Jose Antonio, "when he opposed the idea of bringing machinery to develop

the estate. He used to say that it would be better to be ruined than to let a single man in blue overalls enter the labourers quarters. The town workers have poisoned the minds of these ignorant peasants."

The conversation was suddenly interrupted by a shot. One of the gamekeepers who was acting as scout stood still with his sporting gun cocked, while the other spurred his horse towards the prey which was crouching in the cover afforded by the bush. Was it a man or was it a creature of the fields? They soon saw that it was indeed a man who was twisting about like a weazel and groaning with pain. Jose Antonio and Juan Manuel advanced. The game-keepers had a trick of loading the guns with coarse salt which inflicted painful superficial wounds, and the victim had been hit in the back of the neck and the shoulder, and from his punctured skin dribbled bubbles of blood.

"I saw him lying in ambush in the brush," explained the game-keeper. "I called him to come out and when he began to run I fired."

The man, a small dark gipsy, almost as black as an Abyssinian, the pupils of his eyes dilated by pain and fear, gazed first at one and then at the other of his captors as if trying to guess which of them was going to finish him off. They dragged him to the stirrup of the Marquis, who gave him such a pitiless look that he flinched under it.

"Tie him up—he commanded briefly—we will make him talk when we get to Seville."

One of the game-keepers bound his hands with a rope which he fastened to the tail of his horse and the cavalcade went on its dusty way to the hamlet of La Concepcion where, the previous night, the reds had been quartered. As they drew near the horsemen formed a semicircle and, with their rifles and sporting guns ready for action, they spurred their horses to a gallop. They reached the white walls of the houses without encountering resistance. In the wide patio of the principal house, in the peasant quarters, and in the barns and sheds there was not a soul. The sun in its course was shining peacefully on a few hens scratching on a dung heap. The horsemen, elated by their easy conquest, pranced about on their horses cheering for the Marquis, General Franco and Spain.

The sons of the Marquis dismounted and went into the house. There was no one there. In the deserted rooms the chests of drawers had been forced open and emptied, the doors of the wardrobes had been torn from their hinges and the old oak chests had been slashed and battered by vandal hands. Everything of value in the house had been stolen or destroyed. A piece of paper bearing the words "Committee Room" had been nailed on the door. There was a disorder of papers, broken doors, empty cartridges, and on the wall a red and black flag, and scribblings of revolutionary slogans displaying much hatred and many spelling mistakes.

The three brothers left the devastated house by

another door leading into the fields; the same door by which the reds had left a few hours previously. In a small courtyard lay a little calf tethered to the ground. It had been hamstrung and as it lay there unable to move, it lifted its head to the implacable skies and moored sadly. Jose Antonio, the eldest son, approached, and the poor beast turned its large soft stupid eyes towards him. The reds, unable to take it with them, had left it to die in that miserable manner. Jose Antonio, moved to pity by its agony, drew his hunting knife and killed it with one stroke so that it should suffer no longer. Suddenly a red mist came before his eyes and he ran back to where the prisoner stood.

"Scum! Murderer!" he shouted and plunged the knife, still dripping and hot with the blood of the animal, into the flesh of the man. The padre came running quickly and reproached Jose Antonio for his impulsive fury.

"You have done wrong!" and he began to murmur prayers by the side of the small dead gipsy who, as he lay there, presented a profile reminiscent of an Egyptian Pharoah, from whom, according to tradition, the Spanish gipsies are descended.

The country-side appeared to be deserted. They rode during the whole morning without meeting a single human being. At noon they reached the outskirts of Villatoro, a village of some importance. The Marquis ordered half of his men to dismount and, leaving the horses in a safe and sheltered position, they surrounded

the village as it was possible that the reds were lying in ambush inside the houses.

The Marquis, at the head of his sons and the rest of the men, rode along the main street. Their advance along the wide deserted street was a silent and solemn one and the only sound in the whole village was the clatter of the horses' hooves on the cobbles. All the doors and windows were shut and bolted and on the flat roofs there were sheets which had obviously been used for flags of surrender. When they reached the village square they saw that the church facing the town hall was still smouldering. One of the walls had caved in and in the blackened interior of the church, lying on the floor, was the altar which had been smashed to pieces amongst the sacred pictures which had been torn from the walls. The wind rustled the leaves of the holy books whose edges had been blackened by the flames.

Taking cover at the street corners ready to repel an attack, the horsemen waited for the other group to rejoin them. Still no sign of any reds! Was the village deserted? Was it an ambush?

A little window near the roof of one of the houses opened cautiously and slowly there appeared a bald-headed little old man with yellow skin like parchment and a toothless mouth. He shouted the Phalangist slogan of "Arriba España!!"

"Arriba España!" answered the horsemen, lowering the barrels of their guns. The owner of the head, a

very old, dried-up man, came out of the house and, with much bowing and scraping, approached the Marquis who was sitting upright on his horse in the middle of the square and embraced his knee, calling out in a tremulous voice:

"Long live our saviours!" "Long live Spain's saviours!"

He began at once in a quick and broken voice to tell them that the village was practically deserted. At the beginning of the trouble, when the reds had gained the upper hand, all those prosperous enough to be able to do so had gone to Seville. Many who could not escape were either killed by the reds or marched before them to the mining district of the Rio Tinto and towards Etremadura. He had managed to hide in a miserable little house for many days, running the risk of being shot if found, because he had always been a partisan of the upper-classes and a conservative. Every one of those who had remained in the village with him had sided with the reds and had helped the revolutionary committee, some for lack of backbone and others because they were only too pleased to do so. But they had all assisted in the looting and killing, either as spectators or active participants.

"They are a lot of 'canallas,' and as such must be shot, every one of them," he kept on repeating. . . . He was ready to denounce the evil doings of each one of them.

"Are the culprits still in the village?"

The old man shook his head:

"Those who were implicated left at dawn with the revolutionary committee. Only those confident that there is no proof of their complicity have remained but they have forgotten, or they do not know, that I am still here and alive, and able to confront them with their wretched hypocrisy. If any now make the fascist sign whose fists I have seen clenched I will denounce them, Señor Marquis, for I will have no peace till I have seen them hanged."

And with the ferocious cruelty engendered by suffering and fear, he urged eagerly:

"Let them all be hanged, Señor Marquis, yes, yes, every one!"

Rafael, who with the others surrounded the old man listening to his story, jerked his horse's rein and rode sadly away. He had heard enough. His eyes wandered along the deserted street with its closed shutters trying to envisage what was going on within those humble dwellings. They must be suffering the torment of trapped animals. Was it possible that they would have to kill them all?

Rafaelito's trend of thought was interrupted by loud hurrahs and a discordant and hellish noise from hooters and claxons coming from the direction of one of the roads leading to the village. The noise came from a caravan of Phalangist lorries that had started from Seville to take part in the mopping-up operations in the numerous villages and hamlets which comprised

the estates of the Marquis and the surrounding countryside. With much waving of red and black flags, and lifting of rifles above their heads, and singing at the top of their voices their spirited party-song, the Phalangists packed tightly in the lorries, arrived at the main square of the village where they unloaded and, with much commotion, finally lined up to receive the sharp commands of their leaders. They were arrayed in smart uniforms consisting of blue shirts, foraging caps, leather strappings and black trousers, and aped the automatic precision of the professional soldiers. This was for them an occasion upon which they could satisfy their latent desire for the brilliance and glory of soldiering. The professional soldiers looked on at this manifestation tolerantly yet, truth to say, they were not very much amused by it for they sensed in it pretensions to rivalry which inculcated in them a mixture of jealousy and contempt.

The leader of the Phalangist company, which comprised about a hundred men, talked for a time with the Marquis, then, the conversation finished, he marched along the main street accompanied by the old man and followed by a patrol of armed Phalangists.

The Marquis gathered his own men round him. There was nothing more for them to do in that place. The enemy had run away and their mission was to join battle with them. Nothing could be gained by terrorising the wretched people cowering in the interior of their houses. The real task consisted in fighting and

destroying the bands of armed reds that were going about killing, devastating and plundering at will. According to what they had heard the red pest had reached the important village of Manzanar and the sooner they hastened there the better. After the Marquis had spoken a few words to this effect the leaders started to round up the horsemen and made ready to continue on their way.

The Phalangists, however, were not willing they should do this. Before forging ahead they considered it necessary to clean up the district so that no red should be left in the rear. In the village no doubt a good net-full of reds could be gathered, with the help of those sympathisers still alive who would gladly denounce them. A few hours would suffice to carry out what amounted to a mere police round up. To this the Marquis answered disdainfully that that was no task for him and he told his men to get together and be ready to ride on. The Phalangists decided to remain in the village where, as their leader had it, "they would find plenty to do." They divided themselves into patrols, some keeping guard, and others going from house to house searching for reds. The little old man urged them on with torrents of venomous advice.

Meanwhile, Rafael led his horse into the fields and, coming to a grove of olive-trees, dismounted. After tying his horse to a low branch he lighted a cigarette and, sitting on a big stone, let his troubled thoughts

wander. From where he was sitting he could see the small white houses of the village clustered round the beheaded spire of the church's blackened shell. Not even one thin column of blue smoke rose from a single chimney-stack on the flat roofs. Not a human being could be seen anywhere. What tragedy and solitude! Never before had Rafael felt such a strange sensation of emptiness.

His melancholy frame of mind was shaken from him by something he noticed in the distance; a woman was opening the back door of the courtyard of one of the houses and, after looking round cautiously and quickly, she beckoned to someone to come out. A man appeared behind her, embraced her quickly and started to run, crouching and taking cover under the shelter afforded by the corral fence. He was holding a sporting gun in his hand. As Rafael jumped up, rifle in hand, two or three small children came out of the corral and, raising their little arms, waved good-bye to the fugitive who, without turning his head, ran rapidly across the fields anxious to reach the shelter of the olive grove where Rafael, with his rifle aimed, was waiting. At that moment he saw five or six fascists appear behind the woman and children; they were easily recognisable from afar by their blue shirts. The woman threw herself at the feet of the one who seemed to be their leader, and Rafael guessed rather than saw that she was pushed roughly aside and fell to the ground. The same man levelled his gun at the running man and

fired. The whizzing of the bullet must have sounded with the same intensity in the ears of the man who was running as it did to the man who was waiting.

Rafael, hidden by the trunk of an olive tree, saw the fugitive coming in his direction unaware of his presence and thinking only of the danger from the rear. He could have killed him like a rabbit. In the back of his mind perhaps this intention lurked, for his fingers closed on the trigger but the pressure stopped at that. Why? . . . He could not have explained it even to himself. As the man sped past he saw Rafael and cursed him, then, making a swift detour, he continued to run on. With his rifle still pointed at him Rafael followed his movements. This time he knew that if he did not press the trigger it was because something in him deliberately refused to do so, so he lowered his rifle while the fugitive gained ground rapidly and disappeared in the distance.

The fascists were now pursuing the man shooting as they ran. Rafael heard the bullets hum dangerously near and took refuge behind a big tree trunk until he thought he could make himself heard, when he shouted:

"Arriba España! Stop shooting this way or you are going to hit one of your own men."

They came up and surrounded him suspiciously, ready to shoot, but after Rafael had explained who he was and produced papers in evidence, they abandoned their threatening attitude.

"Did you see an armed red running in this direction?" inquired the leader of the men.

"I did not."

"That is very strange, because we know he came this way."

"It may be so but I have not seen him."

"Very, very strange! Well, you will have to explain all this when the moment arrives."

Rafael shrugged his shoulders and, turning his back on the group, untied his horse and walked back with them.

The old Marquis and his followers had no idea how big and venomous was the wasps nest which they had uncovered. A hail of bullets was discharged from every window upon any horseman who came within range. The reds concentrated in Manzanar let them approach confidently, believing that they would expect to find another deserted village such as the one they had just left. But when they had them all together in a group in the main street they cut off their retreat and began to fire from all sides. Some of the horses stampeded, two or three of the riders fell gesticulating from their horses, and others spurred their mounts forward and, with much noise and confusion, surrounded the old Marquis and endeavoured to protect him. The Marquis, controlling his rearing horse with a firm hand, shouted:

"Forward; forward. . . . Viva España!!"

He managed to break away from the circle formed by his men and, with his three sons and the most cool and collected of his men who returned the fire levelled at them, advanced towards the principal square of the village. The others hastened to follow. Forming a compact group they all entered the main square at a gallop under a gruelling fire from the reds, many of whom were lurking in ambush round the street corners. This advance disconcerted for a moment the reds who had expected the riders to retreat, once they realised they had fallen in a trap. This bold manœuvre saved them. Jose Antonio and Juan Manuel, using their rifles as clubs, charged the enemy and managed to scatter them. Taking advantage of their momentary confusion the riders took shelter under the arches of the main square. Here they dismounted rapidly and, forming themselves into a solid group, dashed with fury and determination into the Town Hall, overcoming all resistance. Many fell before reaching their goal under the murderous fire from the surrounding houses. The maddened horses ran blindly about the square with blood gushing from their bullet wounds as, one after another, they fell dying to the ground. One of the riders who had fallen in the square was battered beneath their flying hooves. Another, making a foolhardy attempt to rescue his mount, fell with his arms round the animal's neck, man and beast pierced by the same bullet. When the last of the riders had gained the Town Hall and were ready to take up the

defence of their newly-conquered position, they realised that in all they were now only about forty men, nine of whom were wounded. The rest had been killed or had escaped into the fields. In the basement of the Town Hall they found half a dozen women and eight or ten children sheltering there who had been left behind by the reds when they were overpowered and put to flight.

The shooting continued from outside but the Marquis and his men were well protected within the big and solid building which, with its thick walls and isolated position, could be defended for hours. They had to organise quickly; loopholes were made, windows and doors were barricaded, and men were placed in strategic positions. If they could resist for three or four hours they would be rescued by the Moors and Phalangists who by now should be on their way to Manzanar. The women and children would be kept as hostages, but in the meantime they were left where they were. The reds, who assuredly believed that reinforcements were on their way, increased the fury of their attack and the men inside the Town Hall soon noticed that they were manœuvring in order to storm the improvised fort. There were a few moments of tragic calm during which the reds shouted to them to give themselves up. Rafael heard his name called aloud, the voice coming from a house near the Town Hall. He went cautiously to one of the windows and shouted back:

"Here is Rafael. . . . Who wants him?"

"It is I, Julian, 'El Maestríto'," he called back, using his nickname of the "little schoolmaster."

"What do you want?"

"Give yourself up. . . . Tell your men to give themselves up. You haven't a ghost of a chance."

"You are forgetting who I am. No son of my father will surrender. You used to call me 'El Señorito,' the young gentleman, the young blood. . . . Well, a 'señorito' does not give himself up."

"The señoritos are swine, all of them. If you do not give yourselves up we shall kill you all like dogs. The caste of 'señoritos' has come to an end at last."

"Before that happens you will beg for mercy. . . . Reinforcements are hurrying from Seville, you and your men had better run away before it is too late."

"When they get here they will find the Town Hall blown sky-high with dynamite and the whole lot of you swine gone with it."

"You are forgetting that your wives and children are here with us."

"We shall burn the place and when you try to escape from the flames we shall shoot you down like rats."

"And with us the women and children."

A moment of heavy silence followed. Both men were horrified by their own words.

"You can't do that, Rafael. You are not such a filthy cur," said the Maestríto after a while.

"And you will not blow the place up," answered Rafael.

"There is no more to be said then?"

"Nothing."

The men on both sides were losing patience. The reds started shooting again. The besieged could not cope with the attack. They had very little ammunition and the bullets were finding their way through the windows and gradually reducing the number of the marquis' few remaining men.

"El Lunaco," an old tough, a man with a dark skin and a heart of steel, suggested that one of the women should be placed as a shield at an undefended aperture for which they could not spare a man.

"No, Lunaco . . . we can't do that," replied Rafael.

"And why not?" interrupted his brother Juan Manuel.

"Because I say so," answered Rafael. "I would sooner open the door to the reds and let them kill the lot of us."

"If you make a movement in that direction I will shoot you like a dog."

The two brothers, crouching at their loopholes, looked at one another with hatred.

Outside the Town Hall a similar scene was taking place. The Rio Tinto miners were already placing dynamite sticks between convenient cracks in the stones of the wall. El Maestrito was opposing them.

"Look here! . . . If you think we are going to let them get out alive you are mistaken," said a man with a big five-point star pinned on the breast of his blue overalls. He was one of those "workers from the city" who, as the Marquis had said, were the cause of the peasants' rebellion.

"The women and the children are inside," argued Julian, El Maestrito.

"Even if my own mother were there we would blow them up just the same. Go on, boys!"

The attack increased in violence. The defenders were fighting desperately. Doors and window shutters were flying about in splinters. The reds kept throwing dynamite sticks on to the roof bringing down big chunks of masonry; a bottle of petrol had ignited one of the shutters and the flames were spreading rapidly.

The firing decreased for a moment, with only a stick of dynamite thrown from a distance exploding on the building. What was happening? Had the attackers mined the house and withdrawn in safety before the explosion? The men inside realised that they would have to make a rapid sortie before the fatal moment. They were about to do so when Rafael asked:

"What about the women and children?"

"They will have to find their way out when they see that we are leaving. . . . But anyhow that does not matter. . . . Perhaps you imagine that their menfolk will spare *us* when we get into the open."

"Our duty is to tell them what is happening so that they can get away," insisted Rafael.

"I will tell them," said El Lunaco, winking at Juan Manuel. El Lunaco went to the basement and, terrorising the women with a gesture, told them to keep their mouths shut. He then bolted the door and joined the others.

"They know now. . . . They are all right. Let us hurry . . . and get killed quickly by that rabble."

The Marquis' men ran into the main square expecting to be mown down as they did so but as they emerged, they were surprised to see that only a few scattered and badly aimed shots greeted them. Not a single man was hurt. The group crossed the square at the run and still the shots were few and far between. What had happened to the hundreds of men that had been attacking them?

Hardly had they advanced along the main street when they realised what was happening. From one of the approaches to the village they could hear the continuous volleying of rifles. A fight was taking place on the outskirts of the village. The reinforcements had arrived. They had been saved.

Directed by the sharp staccato tac-tac of a machine-gun they advanced cautiously, intent on attacking from the rear the reds who were now caught between them and the advancing troops. They could see how the reds had taken shelter behind the walls of the court-yards of the last houses in the village. . . . Suddenly,

above the din of the rifle volleys and the rat-tatting of the machine-guns, they heard an uncanny growling rumbling noise. Shouts that sounded like the howlings of a pack of mad wolves; threatening shouts which they soon recognised. The Moors were charging, seeking hand to hand fighting in a frenzy of blood-lust.

This was the critical moment for the Marquis' men to attack. The result was pandemonium. The battle reached a climax in which no one taking part in the *melée* realised what was happening. No one involved in a battle ever sees it. Battles are described imaginatively and by deduction from results. Fighting of this kind is blind, obeying a biological instinct to kill in a delirious frame of mind that runs to encounter death. The victors are those that manage to escape disaster and know how to take advantage of their vital energy; those that are better equipped for the struggle; and those that have made fighting a profession and for whom a pitched battle is a medium of expression.

In this case it was quite natural that the Moors, the Foreign Legionaries and also the "señoritos," who were all strong healthy sportsmen, should prevail. Heroism and desperation were of no avail to the peasants and workers on the red side. They only knew how to let themselves be killed without attempting to run away, solidly and hopelessly. Once the climax was over the Moors mopped up the field of battle and hunted down the few reds left alive.

The victorious Moors and Legionaries then pro-

ceeded to enter the village in a final raid of extermination. Behind them roved the Phalangist troops and the horsemen, led by the famous bull-fighter El Malagueño. The stubborn resistance shown by the reds would have to be punished and the victors would be pitiless. The patrols of Phalangists entered the houses, taking with them the men they found hiding there. Those that were caught armed were shot at once. A giant Moorish sergeant was carrying a Lewis-gun and, at a signal from an officer, poured a jet of lead on the prisoners brought in front of him. He moved the gun up and down leaving their punctured bodies lying in an unsightly line of death.

All suspected of firing at the troops were immediately shot also. Each prisoner was seized by the collar, his shirt was then ripped open and his right shoulder exposed. If his skin bore any trace of a blue mark it was considered evident that he had used a rifle which had "kicked" and he was at once dragged before the gigantic and terrible executioner.

Thus, house by house and street by street, the implacable justice of war took its sanguinary course.

Rafael returned from the battle, his soul sunk in bitterness. The shadows of night fell on the village and brought a merciful pall of darkness, blotting out the crimson skies and enshrouding his heart in sombreness. He walked alone at a distance from the rest.

Taking the corner of a lonely street he noticed in

the darkness the form of a man running towards him. On catching sight of him the man took shelter under the portal of a house, but Rafael thought he recognised him.

"Julian!"

The fugitive did not reply.

"Julian!" shouted Rafael again.

"Let me go by or I will kill you," came the harsh voice of the "Maestrito."

"Hurry!" replied Rafael, stepping aside to let him pass. "I am sure you don't think me capable of giving you up."

"You are capable of everything. . . . Murderer!"

He ran past and spat at Rafael savagely: "Murderers, the lot of you, murderers!"

Hardly had he gone a few yards when he met a patrol. Some shots rang out. Rafael could see in the darkness that the Maestrito was surrounded and overpowered.

"Now they will kill him," he thought, feeling profoundly moved.

But apparently they were after him as well, for they had seen him loitering and trying to conceal himself at the other end of the street. They had evidently mistaken him for a red and started shooting and shouting to him to stop and give himself up.

"I am one of you," shouted Rafael.

They approached cautiously. This time it was of no use to give his name and condition. They arrested

him, together with El Maestrino, and he was brought before the leader of the squadron, but he could give no satisfactory explanation of his presence in that lonely street, so close to a notorious red leader. The Phalangists, putting two and two together and remembering what had happened earlier in the day, refused to listen to anything he had to say and, considering him a suspicious character, ordered him to be taken to Seville with El Maestrino and a few red prisoners too important to be shot out of hand.

The little cortège rode sadly back to the estate from where it had set out so proudly, so confident, the horses prancing with excitement, the men square-shouldered, arrogant with pre-conceived triumph. Now about a third of them were left and of these more than half were wounded and those who could, walked, for their noble beasts had been shot under them.

The Marquis, still at the head of his procession, was a broken old man, for his favourite son, his youngest, was not with him. He was not even away with his other brothers fighting for their cause, he was worse than dead, a prisoner taken by his own side suspected of treachery. Only an eleventh hour reprieve had spared him from the firing squad. He was an exile.

The priest, Don Frasquito, rode by the Marquis' side; he was wounded in the head, and his left arm shattered, but he rode bravely and talked to keep up the drooping spirit of his old friend knowing however that nothing

was of any use. Even the loud-mouthed "El Lunaco" was silenced.

The sun was setting in crimson glory in the west. Some buzzards were wheeling high in the quiet heavens, black spots against the scarlet curtain of the sky.

The prison that the rebels had improvised in Seville was an old sometime popular music-hall called the Salon Variedades on Trajano Street and quite naturally it did not look like a prison at all. The raids that the rebels were constantly making in the vast country round about Seville had resulted in the constant arrival of large numbers of prisoners who had to be confined the best way possible in all sorts of queer places and the Salon Variedades was overflowing with a motley crowd. Peasants, town workers, red "señoritos" (for there were also "señoritos" amongst the reds), old politicians who had backed the Popular Front, University professors, agitators, republican journalists and many nondescripts were herded together in a chaotic throng.

During the daytime the prison of Variedades presented the most picturesque aspect imaginable. The Andalusians with their charming manners, natural distinction and witty repartee dispelled all sense of tragedy. Street sellers with all kinds of articles crowded the doors of the prison to sell their wares. Shrimp sellers with baskets filled with tasty morsels invaded

the place, crying the price and superior quality of their delicacies; a boot-black who belonged to the communist party sang 'fandangos' in a monotonous undertone; the mayor of a village, who had belonged to half a dozen political parties and had been caught napping, told highly-coloured jokes. An effeminate clerk was entertaining an audience with his funny imitations of the Fascist leaders and, at the same time, telling piquant details of their lives, but it was obvious, from his mordant manner, that his biting tongue was one of the main causes of his incarceration. A little hunchback whose two brothers had been killed by the reds, moved to and fro acting as gaoler. He had asked for the post on an impulse of hate and desire for revenge, yet he took care not to let a single word or gesture betray his secret. The fascists, with the mania for reform common to all dictatorial movements, tried to enforce a rigid discipline based on cold showers, Swedish physical exercises and general military routine. But they soon gave up against the passive resistance of the prisoners, and finished by letting them do as they pleased. Without restraint and quite at their ease the prisoners sang songs, stood chatting in corners and ate shrimps; these things being quite natural to an Andalusian, whether free or captive.

At dusk all these typical touches disappeared from the picture and the same people who, while the sun shone, acted frivolously and did not seem to care a hoot about their fate, doubled up and crouched near

their bundles of clothes and counted in anguish the long hours to the coming of the dawn. The hour of midnight was the climax of their terror, for at this time the hunchback went about the place calling by their names those who were included in a list he carried with him. Outside in the street the lorries started up their engines, thus reminding the prisoners what was in store for them. To these conveyances, always waiting like fate, were brought the prisoners whose hour had come. Hardly a word of protest or revolt ever left their lips, nor were there demonstrations of anguish and fear. The men were taken away to be slaughtered like so many cattle. Only one man in a hundred would make some tragic gesture of protest which was soon stifled in the frozen terror engendered by their surroundings.

The old comrades would shout "Long live the social revolution!" while they were being removed.

No one replied and at that the doomed would hang their heads and allow themselves to be led away quietly. The lorry with the prisoners went off in the direction of the Alameda Park, followed by a lorry full of Moors and still another one with Phalangists.

With the first glimpse of dawn the daily drama was enacted.

Rafael and the Maestrillo lay side by side. Neither slept. At first they had sulked with one another, but the fundamental sympathy existing between the two

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finally prevailed. The Maestrino was not unaware that this was the reason why Rafael had been taken prisoner. At first Rafael refused to answer him when he spoke, but finally when the other said:

"I know it was through you that the women and children were saved. That was damned decent of you," Rafael muttered back:

"Oh, shut up and go to hell," and from that moment the barriers were down. They spoke together like two doomed men, freely, heart to heart, knowing that nothing mattered any more. Red or fascist they were just two human beings with the same anguish and fears. El Maestrino knew that at any moment his name would be called from that fateful list which the hunchback carried in his claw-like hand and read from with so much spleen. He was going to his death with his back to the wall. Rafael would go to another kind of death in exile.

Of such things they talked in the comparatively quiet hours of the night.

"Julian Sanchez Rivera, of the village of Carmona"—called out the hunchback, from his paper.

"Here," answered calmly a lugubrious voice.

He stood up and, before starting on his way, cast a sad and slow look about him. Some twenty prisoners were there crouching motionless against the wall, their heads in their hands. From one of the sordid beds a man sprung up erect and, with extended arms, approached him.

The two men embraced at length and in silence. Breast to breast they felt their hearts beat together. Only a moment, but that was worth a lifetime to both of them.

"Adios, Julian."

"Salud, Rafael."

Yet even in this eternal farewell each gave the other the salute belonging to their respective creeds. Each ideal clothed in the rigorous cloak of its unyielding form. Each doomed to the same end. . . .

The car in which Rafael was travelling left behind the sunny villages of the provinces of Seville and Cadiz. No stop was made before the frontier. The traveller showed his passport and other papers to the policeman and was allowed to pass into British territory. He went straight to the Rock Hotel in one of the principal streets of Gibraltar and threw open wide the window of his room. There, across the bay, he could see the twinkling lights of Algeciras. Behind the Spanish town, a background of red skies was gradually turning dark purple and the Spanish coast line was fading away. Soon he could neither see land nor lights; only, in the foreground, the sharp silhouette of the British men of war at anchor in the bay.

It was late in the evening when he went down to the hall of the hotel. Some English women were silently knitting there; an old British judge, with his fourth large whisky and soda half finished at his elbow,

meditated about his judgments as he reclined in a deep arm-chair; a pretty North American girl showed a pair of perfect legs; an elderly lady had fallen asleep, dozing quietly, and half a dozen English men and women were doing absolutely nothing. Just living.

As he crossed the hall he noticed that they were looking at him; he had the sensation of having a stigmata on his forehead, and he felt that to be a Spaniard was to bear a great burden. Gathering all his strength he pulled himself together. He accepted the burden. . . . Everything. . . . And he would find the strength necessary to lift his head and continue on his way to whatever task he was given to perform, to whatever end awaited him. . . .

THE TREASURE OF BRIESCA

ALTHOUGH he was a small man and insignificant at that, he could be obstinate and courageous and was not to be deterred from his task by the shells from the rebel guns which kept bursting at close quarters. He was engaged in making an inventory of all the articles of vertu and treasures accumulated through centuries in that old town in La Mancha which was Don Quixote's country, that had slept for three hundred years in a fold of the Castillian plains.

"Let them shoot away . . . who cares!" he said to himself. "We shall not leave here until we have saved from their claws everything, from the Greco pictures to the altar candle-sticks. When they take Briesca, if ever they do take it, they will have to place a picture of Franco in the main altar of the cathedral for mass. As to the priest, they will have to dress him in a bull-fighter's suit. We shall leave nothing behind, not even a curate's stole."

The militiamen, directed by the little fellow and helped in their task by the terror-stricken villagers searched the houses of the prosperous families, seeking treasures of all kinds that had been removed from convents and churches at the start of the war. One by one they found them, hidden in all kinds of strange

places, jewels, embroidered chasubles and stoles dating from the fifteenth century; rich altar cloths embroidered with pearls and golden thread; engraved, exquisitely worked chalices, sacramental vessels of great antiquity; gold and silver crucifixes; the magnificent votive offerings given by the "conquistadores," Lord Justices and Viceroys of Spain's colonies overseas and the famous masterpieces of the Castillian school of painting. Two Greco paintings, which were the holy of holies amongst Briesca's artistic possessions, were discovered by militiamen, rolled in a big carpet in a dusty garret.

The Madrid Committee instituted to save Spain's works of art from the hands of vandals had entrusted Comrade Arnal with the task of collecting and rounding up the treasures known to be in Briesca and of taking them to the capital. It was a hard and dangerous undertaking. The moment he explained what he had been sent to do the villagers protested vehemently, and if it had not been for the fact that Arnal had with him a well-armed escort of militiamen, he might well have been shot on the spot.

The Revolutionary Committee had to put up with the hated interference of the Madrid envoy, but only on one condition which was irrevocable: not even a pin must be taken from Briesca. The treasures of the churches, convents and palaces of the nobility, now belonged to the people, who would not allow anyone, under any pretext or in the name of any authority,

to appropriate them. If there was danger that the fascists might seize them it was just as likely that the same danger would exist in any other place where it might be put. The treasure belonged to the village and would have to share the village's fate. Arnal embarked on an endless argument with the Revolutionary Committee. He maintained his point of view strongly but he had to contend with the cunning and shrewdness of the villagers whose final decree was: "Not a single pin will leave Briesca."

The last word, however, was spoken by Franco's guns increasing to a terrific intensity, their work of death and destruction getting closer as the day wore on. Only when the bombardment reached a climax did the argument stop, and Arnal succeeded in making them agree that objects of intrinsic value, such as gold, silver, and precious stones, must be rounded up and placed in the custody of the local Committee, to be removed by them if they should have to evacuate the town. The works of art and the archæological masterpieces that Arnal considered as having artistic value were to be concealed in some hiding-place to be known only to three persons, of whom Arnal should be one, with two other members of the Committee to be selected. As to the rest, such things as church ornaments, modern pictures and brass candelabra, all which would not achieve any high price to rapacious and profane eyes, would be mercilessly burnt. The anti-religious conscience of the revolutionaries demanded

that such *auto-da-fé* be performed with all solemnity. Comrade Arnal was forced to agree, but he tried to spare from the flames all the religious bric-à-brac that the militiamen kept piling on, and to make the members of the Committee understand how all of it would, in time, be of enormous documental value. A very useful anti-religious museum, he insisted, could be started with all the inartistic modern machine-made carvings; the third-rate common-place pictures, grossly painted and ugly; the atrocious scourges bearing evidence of human blood, and the clumsy wooden rosaries carved and put together by the peasants. All that could be left for future generations to see and would be a practical lesson in atheism.

"Nothing of the kind," answered the mistrusting villagers, "if we do not burn everything now, sooner or later clericals will reappear and be up to their tricks and make use of this junk again. We must stop that!"

Franco's guns continued to beat out a counterpoint motif as a background to the loud and agitated discussion. When the fascists, from their positions, saw in the darkness of the night the vivid glare that meant, as they rightly guessed, that the villagers were burning the emblems of a religious creed, their guns increased in volume, and shells began to fall in the centre of the village, disembowelling the big old houses from which the women were fleeing, crossing themselves and shouting: "It is the curse of heaven. . . . God is punishing us!"

Arnal and his men continued undauntedly to make a thorough search, compiling an inventory of the artistic and historic treasure of Briesca under the shells of the attackers. Everything that was not gold or silver was used as fuel for the pyre that burned with a mighty flare in the centre of the main square. Round about midnight, the leaders of the militiamen who were defending the village and the members of the revolutionary Committee decided, in a brief council of war, to tell Arnal that as they were certain the enemy would attack at dawn, it was necessary to finish the search quickly so as to leave the men free to go to the front line. Arnal agreed but insisted on being given a few more hours to finish his task. In the end the members of the Committee seized the packages containing gold and silver objects and placed them in a safe place. They then went forward to the front line, taking with them the militiamen who had been helping their comrade Arnal, who remained behind with the two members of the Committee appointed to find a hiding-place for the treasure. They made three enormous parcels of pictures and sculptures, some of which were unique works of art worth millions of pesetas and, at the break of dawn when they were sure that no one was watching, they shouldered their burden and crept along the deserted village street. After two hours of digging with spades and picks, they buried the treasure in a deep trench and returned sweating and exhausted. Arnal had even used his hands for the task, and came back

with broken nails and bleeding fingers. The three men exchanged a glance of triumph and shook hands warmly.

"No one will find the treasure now."

"No one."

The two men belonging to the Committee dropped the spades and picks and took up their rifles.

"And now let us go to face those fascist swine!"

They joined up with the militiamen leaving in lorries for the front line—a couple of hefty and courageous men. Arnal remained behind until day broke, searching for anything of artistic value that had been left. Amongst the small fry saved from the flames he came across some interesting pieces; the blurred panel of a sacred image, a rosary made of big beads that had been lovingly carved by some rustic craftsman. What treasures of devotion! What tenderness was contained in those small, humble objects! He battled against those feelings and relentlessly cast into the flames the religious objects which evoked a faith he condemned. He could not, however, refrain from putting aside in a small heap certain things that exuded so much simple piety and which, despite himself, penetrated the armour of his revolutionary anti-religious philosophy. Arnal experienced an atavistic inclination to respect that piety but the godless creed he had adopted with his revolutionary ideas, made him react strongly against his better feelings.

"I am a sentimental fool," he kept telling himself,

"a fool of an artist, as soft and as useless in a revolution as all artists and intellectuals are. . . . I will have to watch myself carefully."

He opened the window. It was broad daylight. The guns had stopped, but the peace of the early morning was rent by distant rifle volleys. "The fascists will soon be here," he thought.

He went out into the street, carrying under his arm a little parcel containing medals, votive offerings, rosaries and pious prints. The fresh nip of the morning air made his teeth chatter. In the square, warming themselves at the embers of the sacrilegious bonfire, were a few old villagers wrapped up in brown blankets and armed with sporting-guns. They inquired about the progress of the battle from the militiamen who were returning, for a brief rest, from the fighting-line. The lorries remaining in the village must be hurried to the front to bring back the numerous wounded, urged the militiamen. But there were no more lorries left in Briesca; those that had been left had been taken by the cowards who, running away from the battle, had gone to seek safety in Madrid. They had taken Arnal's car as well.

A little later there arrived, with the radiator spurting boiling water and throwing out a vicious column of steam, a lorry full of wounded. The lorry stopped in the square and the stretcher-bearers removed a man who had died on the way. What was the good of taking the body any farther? The ambulance-men reported

disaster. The Moors and Legionaries had attacked in a fury at dawn. At the start, the militiamen, taking what cover they could in the empty spaces of the ploughed fields, had resisted, but the fascists then brought forward their tanks and pierced the line of defenders at several places, and their aeroplanes flew low plying the hose of death of their machine-guns over the militiamen.

While they were telling all this, a touring car appeared overflowing with wounded men and half a dozen others hanging on to the sides. It seemed that the road was full of militiamen who had thrown away their weapons so as to be able to run faster. All those who could hang on to the outside of an ambulance or any car carrying wounded were doing so in order to escape. The principal square of Briesca began to fill up with panic-stricken people emerging from the houses to ask details of the progress of the battle, and to this crowd of villagers was added, in an ever-increasing flow, the retreating militiamen.

When the mass of deserters had reached enormous proportions a car arrived in the square. Out of the car jumped a man who, furious with anger and brandishing a pistol, forced his way amongst the militiamen, shouting at them:

"Scum! Cowards! Traitors! I am going to have you shot, everyone of you!"

It was the officer of the regular army commanding one of the sectors of the front who, realising that his men

were running away, had left headquarters to try and stop the headlong flight. The militiamen cowered back. The haggard faces of these men, seized as they were by terror, acquired a most sinister expression. Like wild beasts in front of their tamer they recoiled, but in their eyes was the spark of desperate fury ready to take advantage of a moment of unwariness of the man baiting and goading them. The commanding officer, blind with rage, shouting like a man possessed, advanced on them, dealing blows right and left with his clenched fists at the faces of those nearest.

"Cowards . . . dogs . . . sons of bitches . . . bastards. . . . I will have you garrotted and placed on the first line parapets! !"

The rage of the commanding officer was increased by the men's behaving like a flock of frightened sheep, without even the guts to ward off, or resent the blows he was raining on them. He went about among the deserters shaking them, spitting in their faces and insulting them. Only one man resisted him. When the commanding officer went for him he pushed him away vigorously with a heavy blow. The officer, taken aback by this astounding breach of conduct directed at his authority, shouted:

"Stand at attention! ! Stand at attention I tell you, or I will kill you! !"

Crouching like a tiger the man sprang at his throat. The commanding officer received the shock of the body at the point of his pistol which was aimed at his

chest. A shot rang out, followed by three or four more. When the officer recovered his balance he saw the man lying on the ground clutching one of his legs like a wild creature; he was in the throes of death and in a last wild effort was trying to bite through the leather riding-boots to get at his flesh. He shook his leg violently and the heel of his boot sank in the bloody face of the man. He had the sensation of having crushed a poisonous viper.

On raising his eyes from the ground, after freeing himself from the dying man, he was confronted by the muzzles of a score of rifles pointing at him. He realised at once that he was lost. The animals at bay had turned against him and were ready to tear him to pieces. He had hardly time to stand erect and at attention and lift his left fist clenched and to shout with a manly voice full of defiance:

"Long live the Republic! Long live the revolution!"

He fell under the first volley, but even after they had him down the deserters kept on firing at him. Arnal, who had witnessed the scene without being able to help the officer, turned and left the spot. The deserters, horrified by their own atrocity, disbanded, and in the square there only remained, near the embers of the bonfire, those two lifeless bodies, the deserter and the hero, the first a victim of his evil instincts, and the other a victim of his duty, both sacrificed to the barbarity of the bloodiest of wars.

No one was seen in the square for a long time.

Another ambulance-lorry, filled to overflowing and with men hanging on to the sides like swarms of bees, made its way slowly into the square. The doctor in charge of the ambulance had to evict by force several deserters who had not sustained the slightest injury, before he was able to attend to the wounded. Two had died on the way and they were taken out and placed on the ground. Another was so badly wounded that it was useless to take him any farther. Arnal recognised him. He was one of the members of the Revolutionary Committee who, a few hours before, had been digging with him to hide the treasure. He was left with the others near the bonfire. Arnal knelt next to him. The dying man tried to sit up. He helped him to lean against some logs and noticed how his eyes, even then veiled by death, were fixed with fraternal tenderness on the dead comrades that had been taken with him out of the ambulance. He guessed that the dying man, unable to speak but fully conscious, was trying to call his attention to something and, following the direction of his look, he recognised the other member of the Committee who had been with them a few hours ago. The dying man slid down until he lay stretched out on the ground. The doctor striving to keep up with his terrible job, and seeing Arnal bending over the man, said:

"Leave that one alone. You can do nothing. He is dead, or he will be dead in a few seconds. Help me to look after the others, and to keep those that are not wounded away from the ambulance."

The task was not an easy one. With panic on their ghastly faces, the militiamen who had left the front were returning to the square. After running across country under the fire of machine-guns from aeroplanes which were mowing them down like grass, they were mad to escape and, driven on by the instinct of self-preservation which knew no control, they invaded the cars and lorries reserved for the wounded. A crowd of twenty or thirty men were trying to get into the ambulance and were even threatening to take the wounded out and to occupy their places. The human beast was quite out of hand and impossible to restrain.

Arnal and the doctor, pistol in hand, managed to keep them at bay; the ambulance started on its way again and Arnal, who had been threatening the deserters while the ambulance was started and the wounded made a little more comfortable, threw down his pistol sick of it all. He felt ashamed of being alive and disgusted with the whole human race.

He went back to the man he had left, who by this time was dead. A little farther off was the body of the other member of the Committee. Now there was no one else who knew where the treasure of Briesca was buried. He thought with a queer sense of satisfaction that, if he too were killed, his revenge would be to take with him the secret of that treasure which no one would ever be able to enjoy again. This selfish thought served to console him.

He picked up the small parcel of relics he had left

near the bonfire and threw it into the embers, putting more logs on to increase the blaze.

Now he had finished with Briesca so he started to walk back along the road to Madrid. The rebel aeroplanes were still pursuing and machine-gunning the long line of stragglers whose retreat was cut off here and there as is an army of ants when someone steps on them.

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Seen from Madrid, the war ebbed and flowed; a gigantic human tide with furious waves breaking against the cliffs of the different fronts. From every corner of republican Spain there arrived in Madrid thousands on thousands of volunteers eager to fight fascism. The rich regions of Catalonia and Valencia sent their well-equipped militia; from the poor villages of Castile and Estremadura came (all they could afford) men in rags armed with old-fashioned sporting-guns and even century-old blunderbusses. These men from the harsh country of those regions were tough and withered like dried-up branches of a vine and, for the first time in their lives, satisfied their centuries-old hunger at the meagre mess supplied in the militia-headquarters, which was, to them, a magnificent banquet. The fight against fascism, preached in villages and hamlets with the same zeal that the Holy War was preached in the time of the Crusades, exhorted these men to throw themselves, in waves of hatred, against the enemy.

Organisation was lacking in ratio to the enthusiasm. The steel point of the fascist vanguards penetrated easily into the shapeless dough of willing fighters thrown together without any kind of discipline. Faced with the iron organisation and the military technique of the rebel army, the waves of volunteers burst like so many soap-bubbles. One after another the militiamen's advance columns were annihilated from the first encounter with the enemy. The people did not know how to wage war. The best, the most courageous, let themselves be killed in fruitless sacrifices; the rest threw down their weapons and ran away in disorder. First in the Andalusian region and Estremadura and then in New Castile the pathetic story was repeated time and time again: all their fire and enthusiasm was doomed to failure from the start. The professional soldiers were practically all on Franco's side. The improvised army of the people had no military leaders and the handful of officers and higher grades who had remained on the side of the Government, had either deserted or been killed while attempting the barren task of making soldiers out of men who had taken up arms against all military discipline and order. A good number of these officers were killed by their own men when, pistol in hand, they attempted to control their shattered nerves and thus avoid a fatal panic.

When the militiamen felt that they were beaten they reacted against their officers: "We have been deceived! The officers are fascist traitors! Let us kill

them!" they cried. Left without officers in this way, their formations melted like butter on a hot plate and the stragglers left their arms and ammunition scattered about the fields and roads, and retreated to Madrid to talk hysterically and boast about their terrific experiences, to admiring audiences in cafés and beer-houses.

The unreliable stories of these men, their coming and going, was all of the war that was known in Madrid, so that Franco's armies advanced almost without resistance towards the capital. First Talavera fell, and then Toledo. The enemy was already about fifteen miles from the capital and nothing had been done apart from sending masses of undisciplined men to the front, there to be easily dispersed by the enemy aeroplanes. The Napoleon of the Republic could not be found. Not even a second-rate military chief capable of organising the militias into some kind of coherent military formation. There was no one capable of making the most of so much wasted courage and enthusiasm for a cause. The leaders of the political parties, converted in one day to military strategists, led their men to a certain doom. When the bloody lessons learned at the various fronts showed that it was imperative to have some knowledge and understanding of warfare, some soldier conversant with the technique of headquarter planning, they were forced to go to the prison to find him, a man who, with other officers and commanders, had been thrown into captivity on

suspicion of being an enemy of the Republic. The man they selected to direct the operations of the red armies, was a general suspected of being a fascist and for weeks he worked day and night under the close vigilance of a couple of armed militiamen. At the first opportunity, this generalissimo deserted to Franco's side.

Meanwhile, the theory-mongers from the political parties were very busy organising what they called "the new revolutionary order," that is to say, the new social structure. With amazing optimism, believing that they were certain of final victory, they created in the rear of that inconsistent army, a formidable bureaucracy with the purpose of socialising or collectivising the whole life of the country. They formed councils of workers, committees for supplies, a union of tenants of houses and flats, various syndicates and, above all, that amazing and paradoxical invention—the "Revolutionary Control." These were the bureaucratic organisations in which those that had failed at the front took refuge. All the shirkers and failures were holding "cushy" jobs behind piles of printed forms and red tape. The most amazing organisations flourished. An anarchist had founded one called "The Gastro-nomic Group of the Iberian Federation of Anarchists," the mission of which was to collect all available hams and other foods and to keep them secure from interference under the close surveillance of the most heroic and gallant of the anarchist militiamen. There was another strong organisation under the name of

"Counter-War." Nobody could ever explain what it meant, but the members of its organisation carried out, with great determination and much flourishing of pistols, the collecting of the rents of flats and houses from the citizens of Madrid.

While all these fantastic activities were functioning with perfect bureaucratic precision, Franco had taken Toledo almost without resistance and was advancing on Madrid.

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Comrade Arnal belonged to one of those countless committees formed under the organising *furor* of the revolution. He was an artist and a good one, perhaps one of the best young painters in Spain, and he had been appointed by the Government to take charge of the preservation of art. He had been given a car and an escort of armed militiamen and they had told him:

"Try to save as much of it all as you possibly can."

Arnal, as a true artist, had given himself wholeheartedly to that very difficult task. With his escort of militiamen he had gone about the towns and villages of New Castile trying to save from destruction the invaluable heritage of Spain's mute testimony to her glorious past. He could not always manage to do what he wanted, owing to the egotism and cupidity he encountered in many of the miserable Castilian villages and towns which opposed any removal of works of art

from threatened places for safe custody elsewhere. The handling of valuable objects had to be done with the help of men who would not listen to reason nor be told what to do. The removal had to be carried out in the midst of hurried evacuations forced by imminent attack from the enemy. Very often the revolutionary fury of the masses let their worst instincts run amuck in a riot of destruction, especially when they realised that they were vanquished.

Ancient palaces were invaded by parties of armed men free to do as they liked with the artistic and historical riches that they found there. Comrade Arnal had a sensitive and reverend respect for all those treasures and shuddered at times at the risk they ran at the hands of the uneducated mob of armed people. How many irreplaceable pieces and unique jewels would be lost for ever? His only consolation was in the realisation that the damage done was less than it might have been. Knowing as he did the ruthlessness of the Revolution and the rapacity of the rabble with their lust for destruction, he marvelled at times at the instinctive respect that they showed towards works of art and the disdain for things that had only intrinsic value. In their confused, chaotic way, they were still capable of fine feelings and, despite the evil passions aroused, there was still some decency left. He could not help but think that, in spite of all, the Spanish people were the least mercenary and most honest people in the world. In any other country it would have been

impossible to imagine such a situation; half a million uneducated men, well-armed and at liberty to satisfy their lowest instincts without any danger to themselves. What crimes could they not commit? From the depth of his reactionary artist's soul, he marvelled at the fact that still something was left standing, that everything had not been swept away, and that all was not entirely lost. When he saw how the militiamen, badly clothed and badly shod, walked haughtily and disdainfully through the magnificent rooms of the lordly mansions in which there were cabinets filled with jewels which no one dreamed of touching, though Arnal knew that many of those poor devils who handed out, without demur, millions of pesetas in silver and bank-notes which they had found in their search, had never even known ordinary comfort nor even possessed more than the barest necessities of life, he could not but feel a great admiration for these people, perhaps madmen or even murderers, who showed such indifference towards riches and material possessions; towards everything for which men start revolutions and go to war.

Yet amongst the city-bred degenerates, rapacity and the low instinct for pilfering was rampant. At times Arnal had to fight gangs of armed desperadoes who looted with impunity, but what surprised him most was that he was able to keep them at bay and that he, the representative of a feeble state with only a couple of armed men at his disposal, could dominate them.

One day he learned that a band of militiamen deserters had taken possession of a palace where there was an invaluable collection of priceless "objets de vertu" and he hastened there in order to prevent looting. When he arrived he found that the men had already started to act as if everything in the palace belonged to them and to dispose of the works of art as they wished. He went into the different rooms and noticed that many things had already disappeared. He then summoned before him the leader of the band and commanded him to respect scrupulously everything in the palace, ordering him to bring back the pieces that had been taken away and informing him that the rooms would be sealed and well-guarded. The leader listened to him at first with nonchalance, then sarcastically and, finally, in a violent rage. Arnal was not afraid of this captain of bandits and threatened to denounce him and have him sent to prison if his orders were not complied with. Suddenly he felt a sharp, hard object pressed against his ribs. The leader of the gang very calmly, without saying a word or turning a hair, had walked towards him and, holding his gun in his hand with the muzzle against his body, was saying:

"Get away, and don't let me see your face here any more! Clear off! Go and tell that story to your Government! Tell your ministers that we have not killed you because we were sorry for you . . . you poor fool! If they want something from the palace ask

them to come here and try and get it. Now go! . . . and as quick as you please . . . understand?"

The man spoke with such determination, stressing his point by pressing the muzzle of the pistol against him in such a very uncomfortable way, that Arnal saw that it would be useless to protest and left without saying a word. In the hall he passed a group of militiamen guarding the door; amongst much laughter and rejoicing they were drinking the best wines from the palace cellars.

"Hey! you artist! . . . join us and have a drink."

"Don't be cross, darling," cried one of them amidst a roar of laughter.

Arnal left without looking at them. A profound sadness invaded him. What could he do? Denounce them? But to whom? Where? Who would pay attention to him? He was utterly discouraged and two or three days later he learnt that the militiamen had abandoned the palace after destroying everything they could not take with them, and that the leader of the gang had been found dead in a lonely street. He had been killed by a shot in the back of the head. Next to his body was his military cap and pinned on it a paper: "A common thief!"

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Arnal's task seemed to him more and more useless. To run from place to place to save a picture or a piece of sculpture, or a carved crystal in the midst of the

vortex of war and revolution, was a senseless undertaking. What was the use anyhow? When life had lost all value, when men died daily by thousands, when a score of millions of human beings belonging to a proud old race were sinking into a state of barbarism and reversion to a primitive age, what sense was there in art or in trying to protect it? What importance could be attached to these mute relics of a glorious past? What was the meaning of all spiritual values and what hope in trying to preserve them from destruction? Had any of those beautiful things helped to spare a single human life or deterred a single crime? He began to think that when men could be sacrificed en masse with such inhuman indifference, the least that could happen was that the works of the spirit should perish also. After all, they had not availed in avoiding barbarity. Why not destroy everything, raze all to the ground? The treasures of spiritual exuberance that the past generations had left had been of little help, it would be best to wipe them out of existence.

As if his sombre thoughts had conjured up the rage of the very elements, half a dozen gigantic flares sprang to life in the darkness of the stormy night. Madrid was burning. A formation of enemy aeroplanes had raided the capital, unloading hundreds of incendiary bombs. Six big fires gave the impression that the whole city was in flames. One of the buildings that was burning, he was told by a passer-by, was the historic palace of Liria, the residence of the Duke of Alba. In spite of

his resolutions, Arnal ran swiftly to the palace which, amongst the mansions of the grandees, was the richest of all in historic and artistic treasures. Its destruction would mean the irreparable loss of the most magnificent testimonies of Spain's grandeur. He stood, overwhelmed by the magnitude of the calamity, contemplating the colossal blaze, visualising the armour of the imperial conquistadores melting into shapeless heaps, and the masterpieces of Goya and Velazquez being devoured by the hungry flames.

The burning of the palace of Liria was the last straw. Arnal's spirit was consumed by that conflagration. No effort could be of any use. Nothing could be saved anywhere. After all, was it worth while to save anything? Was not the spirit of Spain doomed to final destruction in the vortex of utter madness now let loose?

When it was known in Madrid that the Duke of Alba himself had ordered the fascist airmen to destroy his own palace rather than leave it to the mercy of the rabble, Arnal was firmly convinced that the hour had arrived to destroy everything ruthlessly and save nothing from the fury of the mob. He remembered how that other Spanish Grandee, in the time of the Emperor Charles, had razed his palace to the ground in a moment of outraged pride at the royal command to entertain for one night the Constable of Bourbon whom he considered a traitor to the king, Francois I of France. He remembered also those ships that Cortez had

burned; the race, it seemed, was blazing its trail in cycles of time that were a crazy mixture of folly and splendour.

Arnal thought of the treasure he had left so well hidden in Briesca. The two marvellous pictures by El Greco, the delicate carvings and illuminated parchments. The two militiamen who had shared his secret were now dead, he was the only one now who knew. He felt strong and happy at the idea of being the only survivor with such an important secret. He would tell no one. If he was killed his secret would go with him and Briesca's treasure would rot under the Spanish soil, consumed by the very earth of Spain as the flames were consuming so many other glories. Only if at some future date a new and worthy Spain should emerge, would he reveal his secret. When he found himself alone in his room he took out of his wallet the plan he had made of the way to the hiding-place. It certainly was a safe cache, no one could ever discover it. But, in case he should die, he thought it advisable to make it doubly safe and, although the plan had no words to reveal what it was, he sketched the figure of a dead militiaman over the lines of the plan. Now he alone could decipher the plan of the cache. He then replaced the paper in his wallet and decided to go to the main recruiting office.

* * * * *

The task he had undertaken had no longer any

meaning. The only thing that really mattered was to win the war. He resigned his post as member of the Committee for the preservation of the national patrimony and offered his services as a combatant to the military authorities. He was appointed Political Commissary with one of the fighting units at the front.

The first day at the front he witnessed impotently the headlong flight of the militiamen. Nothing could stop them. When the enemy tanks advanced or when the machine-guns of the aviators flew low over their heads and spurted their message of death, nothing that their leaders could say or do would prevent a panic. The very efficient military machine brought into action by Franco impressed and terrorised the most daring workers, peasants and even professional soldiers forming the ranks of the Government forces. All was in vain. They threw away their weapons and ran from the attackers in the direction of Madrid. These masses of untrained men did not know how to fight in the open.

On one of the many tragic afternoons of the rout, hoarse from shouting to the men to keep their heads and stand their ground, he found himself alone in a deserted village with a captain of the regular army, one of the very few that had remained loyal to the Government. The village had a great strategic value and to abandon it without putting up a stiff fight would amount to a catastrophe. The captain, in a frenzy of rage, was shouting insults at the last group of militia-

men who were leaving the village and running along the road leading to Madrid. He picked up a rifle thrown down by a fleeing militiaman and was about to shoot at the fugitives when Arnal seized him by the arm and made him lower his gun.

"It is of no use, comrade. You will achieve nothing by killing one more of them."

The captain let the rifle fall to the ground in utter discouragement.

"I am exhausted," he said in a sombre voice, "they have made me run for days from a few Moors. I refuse to run any longer. I will remain where I am and let the damned fascists get me and shoot me."

"You must make a final effort, comrade. Have faith. Our men have not had time to learn how to make war. They will learn. You will see. They will make a good stand before Madrid and victory will be ours in the end."

"Victory? With that pack of tripe-hounds? Never! We shall never have a single victory."

Arnal looked at him angrily. "What you call a pack of bastards are the people . . . understand?"

"What does it matter what they are? . . . A herd of sheep. Let them run. . . . And you can run away with them, too! You are one of them . . . hurry up and join them! I am a soldier! Yes, a soldier! And I am going to show you—and those cowards—and the fascists—how to die decently! The people! Psh! You make me sick!"

Arnal felt a desire to fly at his throat. He controlled it, but his eyes were full of fury.

"Yes, that is what you are, a soldier . . . a damned fascist!"

He turned his back on the captain and followed the militiamen on the way back to Madrid. The captain kept shouting at him:

"Come back you coward! . . . Come and learn how to die like a man!"

After shouting this he dragged a machine-gun into the cover afforded by a stone pillar and placed it in position ready for action. He then gathered as many cartridge belts as he could find and, placing himself behind the machine-gun and lighting a cigarette, he waited calmly.

The rebels kept firing on the new militiamen positions all night and it was not until dawn that their fire ceased for a time. Arnal was in one of the trenches of the suburbs of Madrid. He was speaking to the men in a profound voice which trembled with emotion. Words were choking him. They were listening to him with bowed heads. He told them how their captain had remained behind to die. How he had preferred to make a stand which was suicidal than to run away.

"To-day," said Arnal, "the same thing will happen. You will turn your backs once more. To-morrow the Moors will enter your houses. They will thrust their bayonets through the beds where your wives and

children lie. Your families will realise your shame. I shall die here. I prefer it."

He said no more. Four hours later the rebel vanguard attacked, after a murderous artillery preparation. Comrade Arnal had kept his word. The first wave of Moors and Legionaries found him erect in the parapet of the trenches. With clenched fist raised and shouting "Long live the revolution" he jumped to meet the onslaught and his death.

He fell mortally wounded in no-man's land. While dying and fully conscious, he tried to examine honestly his motives, but he was unable to do so. His mind wandered. A thousand insignificant and irrelevant trivialities came into his head. . . . That recruiting poster he had seen was very clever . . . very well done. What would happen to that lame dog he saw in the militiamen's dugout? . . . How his heavy shoes hurt him! He also thought about the treasure of Briesca and felt for his wallet. Yes, it was still there, his secret, his sketch. . . . He tried to think clearly about it all. Was he right in what he had done? He did not know the answer to anything. Still doubting and questioning himself, he died.

* * * *

He died, however, without knowing that the sacrifice of the captain, his own sacrifice, and the sacrifice of all the others that had faced the enemy in the supreme moment, had not been entirely in vain. The militia-

men who had always run away from the enemy ran away no more. They resisted the attacks and, when they realised their success, they attacked in their turn. Madrid was expected to fall on the following day but that did not happen. The militiamen held out day after day, week after week, month after month.

Arnal's body was recovered from no-man's land by his comrades. They found, in his breast pocket, his wallet and the blurred sketch of a dead militiaman. They sent the sketch to the war museum that was being organised. A North American journalist saw the sketch and offered to give a few dollars to the collection for the wounded. He will never know that with those few dollars he bought the code of a buried treasure which no one will ever be able to decipher. The "dead militiaman" was worth untold riches and a couple of Grecos thrown into the bargain.

"THE MOORS RETURN TO SPAIN"

"'PAISA'* in the name of the Big God, do not shoot. . . .
Me red, red."

Mohamed showed by his gestures that he was giving himself up. His arms were raised high above his head, fingers wide-spread, and one of his legs was red with blood from a wound, a scarlet flower blooming amidst the baggy rags which were his trousers. He looked like a terrifying scarecrow, only his eyes were alive, shining like two green points of fire. He had thrown down his rifle to indicate that there was no more fight left in him and stood behind the big boulder he had used as cover to defend himself. The reds, fearing some ruse, hesitated to come out into the open and kept firing at him from their shelter behind the surrounding boulders. From time to time the bullets tore chips from the rock close by. The Moor's amazement at not having already been hit a dozen times grew with each badly aimed shot.

"Stop firing!" he kept on shouting. "Me be red, me be republica."

And still the reds kept firing at him, as if at target practice, but no bullet touched him. Mohamed,

* "Paisa" is the word that a Moor gives to anyone who is fighting other than a Moor and "hebreo" to any non-combatant.

astonished to see the shots whizzing past his head, began to feel profound contempt for such clumsy marksmen. He could have scored a bulls-eye with every shot. Such a poor opinion did he form of them that it flashed through his mind that he might as well pick up his gun again and go on fighting; so sure was he of being able to defy such poor warriors. At last one of them dared to come into the open very cautiously and shout:

"Give yourself up!"

Three others, peeping out from behind their cover, echoed the cry—"Give yourself up!"

Mohamed who, as a matter of fact, had given himself up a long time ago, could not understand why four armed men should take so many precautions against an unarmed one, and wounded at that. When he saw the four men round him still afraid, and when he noticed their poor physique and small stature, Mohamed, the stubborn, magnificent Berber warrior, utterly despised them and, in spite of his wounded leg, prepared to fight them.

He let them approach closer, little by little. Hidden in the folds of his burnous he still had his scimitar, and his loaded rifle was in easy reach of his hand. He waited for the right moment then, rapidly pulling out his dangerous weapon, he plunged it, like lightning, full into the chest of his nearest assailant. He then stooped to grasp the rifle and, crouching, shot down a second man and turned to aim at a third who threw down his

sporting-gun and started to run. But he had no time to shoot. The fourth militiaman, a goat-herd from the Sierras, stocky and strong, charged him head foremost like an infuriated ram and they fell to the ground in an embrace of hatred, both brimming with the lust to kill. They fought rolling and twisting; serpent and mongoose. The green eyes of the Berber were fixed on the dark eyes, injected with blood and bile, of the Castilian peasant. The Moor's eyes flinched before the monstrous ferocity of the Spaniard's look as the spirit of his ancestors had fallen in that other mortal embrace that lasted for eight centuries and ended with the conquest of Granada. The goat-herd stretched his short neck and, opening his jaws like a beast of prey, sunk his sharp, strong, wolfish teeth into the throat of the Moor who, in agony, made a supreme effort to rise, with his enemy still grasped in his arms and to throw him off; the strong jaws and teeth were tearing at his flesh. He tore himself away and with knife in hand he advanced to kill, but the goat-herd had seized a large sharp-edged stone and flung it at him, catching him on the forehead with a blow which felled him. Then, in blind fury, the Spaniard squeezed the Moor's throat until his eyes bulged in their sockets.

The goat-herd only let go when he heard one of his wounded comrades call to him for help. He was bleeding from the knife-wound which was, however, less serious than it looked. The other militiaman had

also had a narrow escape with a superficial flesh wound in the arm. The third militiaman had come back by then and, between the three of them, they lifted the Moor up and took him to a hut a short distance away where they threw him across a mule in order to take him in triumph to the nearest village.

They thought he was dead. Mohamed, however, had undoubtedly more than one life. In spite of a bullet through his leg, a ghastly wound in the forehead, a lacerated neck and the deep marks of the goat-herd's hands on his throat, he was still alive; so much so, that when they halted for a moment to light a cigarette, he jumped to his feet with a supreme effort, but this proved too much for him and he fell down.

"Shall we finish him off?" asked the militiaman who had run away in a panic. He caught hold of his sporting gun by the barrel and was ready to use it on the Moor's head as a club.

"No. Let us take him alive to the village," said the goat-herd.

"When I killed a wolf in the Sierras and brought him to the village, they paid me twenty-five pesetas. For a live Moor they ought to give us one hundred at least."

While still discussing how much they would get for their quarry, they replaced the Moor across the back of the mule, and tied his hands together with a stout cord, and started off in the direction of Montreal, the village whose church spire could be seen in the distance.

Secured with a rope to the mule's pack saddle, the Moor's head dangled near the ground, and their progress was marked by a bloody track.

The village was situated at the bottom of a valley under the shadow of the Gredos mountains, and the Almanzor and Galayos peaks stood like gigantic sentinels, barring the passage of the rebel armies. Franco's troops had their headquarters in Avila, in the Sierras some miles from Madrid, and from there they were trying to cross the passes in order to be able to descend into the valleys occupied by the loyalists. In this way the advance on Madrid would, they imagined, be a simple matter. The militiamen guarding the passes with advanced posts were considered strong enough to prevent the advance of the enemy and so, in the villages of the valley twenty to twenty-five miles away, the people felt secure and continued to live their ordinary uneventful and peaceful lives.

The four men had found Mohamed in one of the wildest spots in the Sierras. To the villagers, the presence of a Moor in those parts was staggering and unbelievable. It was thought that the rebel troops were still on the other side of the mountains. The passes, for all they knew, had not been forced. The peasants did not know, however, that the previous night the rebels had thrust a wedge of Moors and Legionaries through an almost inaccessible pass of the Sierras, and that these were advancing on enemy territory so as to

take the militiamen by surprise in the rear. Mohamed straying apart from the troops, possibly to indulge in some private marauding of his own, had been discovered by the patrol of one of the recruiting stations dotted about to round up anyone suspected of fascist sympathies.

The entrance of the Moor and his captors in Montreal was indeed spectacular. The villagers had on other occasions seen their hunters return from the Sierras carrying across the back of a mule a wild goat of the *Capra Hispanica* species. At times they had been shown big brown foxes which had been caught in the pine woods or even some lonely wolf; but they could not realise that the quarry could be a Moor—a strange creature more dangerous than a wild animal. They surrounded the hunters in admiration, the children with wide-open eyes shouted:

"Look! Look! they have caught a black man, a Moor," while the women, in fear and rancour, approached the wounded prisoner to hurl insults at him.

The patrol halted in front of the Revolutionary Committee Room. Mohamed was released from the mule and taken before the leaders for questioning. But the Moor knew only a few words of Spanish and kept repeating them in a confused and monotonous sing-song.

"No matar Moro (No kill the Moor). . . . In the name of Dios Grande no matar Moro" he kept saying,

imploing them to spare his life. "Moro be red . . . be Republica."

A long argument started between the members of the Committee as to what to do with the unusual case. The republicans argued that the best thing to do was to take the prisoner to Madrid and deliver him into the hands of the proper authorities; the anarchists said that the logical thing to do was to let him go free so that he could in this way be redeemed from his past slavery and eventually become a free citizen and a decent member of the anarchist community; the communists were of opinion that the man must be attended to, his wounds taken care of, and when he was healed and restored to his normal strength, he should be enlisted in the fighting militia and sent to the front in defence of the people. There was one more opinion: outside the Committee Room the excited voices of the villagers and militiamen shouted that they wanted the prisoner and that he belonged to them, to deal with as they pleased, which was to kill him without any further delay.

There was such a pandemonium of angry voices, hoarse and violent, and cries of hysterical women round Mohamed that he became confused and weak and it was clear that at any moment he might die, thus frustrating the plans of all. He looked so ghastly that even those who clamoured for his immediate death thought better of it; it wouldn't be much fun as there was so little of Mohamed left to finish. It was therefore

decided that the wounded Moor should be rushed to the local hospital, which was already filled to overflowing. Two militiamen took hold of him by the arms and half-dragged, half-carried him to the hospital, followed by a mass of villagers and militiamen who continued to discuss the situation. On the way, a militiaman asked them to stop for a second. He explained that he was taking pictures for the papers and that a photo of the Moor would be a good subject. Mohamed was placed against a wall to be photographed but every time the cameraman tried to get his camera ready the Moor started to scream and to jump at him, believing that he was going to be shot with some kind of mysterious weapon. The cameraman who wanted a posed photograph had to be contented with a snapshot of a wild man.

In the hospital they placed him on the operating-table and for two hours doctors and nurses in white overalls tended him with great care. They did all in their power to alleviate his suffering and to hurt him as little as possible while tending his wounds. The face of the savage African relaxed as he realised dimly that the figures in white, like so many ghosts, were being kind and gentle to Mohamed. He began to smile at them tentatively, the large-mouthed childish grin of his kind. Surely those nurses with such gentle hands were Houris of Mahomet's Paradise.

The members of the Committee, however, were not satisfied with the result of their arguments. It was

considered necessary to go back to the Committee Room for more arguing, and the villagers and militiamen assembled again outside to continue their agitated discussions.

The leader of the overflow meeting was the goat-herd whose guttural voice dominated the turmoil. "He was right," contended some other goat-herds, muleteers and lumbermen friends of his—"Enough with the arguing of the Committee. The Moor belonged to the people. The militiamen who had captured him were villagers. He was not going to be sent to Madrid nor was he going to be let go free or enlisted in the fighting militia."

The goat-herd was appointed to go to the Committee Room to demand that Mohamed should be delivered to the villagers. The members resisted and tried to convince the goat-herd, who, after cursing and swearing against "that b—— lot of politicians," ran from the Committee Room and shouted to the crowd "come on! . . . let us get the Moor!"

They ran like a pack of wolves, forced an entry into the hospital, overpowered the resistance offered by the doctors and nurses, found Mohamed in one of the beds still smiling as though he were in Paradise, and dragged him out amidst vociferations and curses.

They placed him against a wall. Mohamed, with his slow wits enfeebled by weakness, could not realise what was happening and on what could be seen of his face amongst the white bandages, there still lingered a

smile of satisfaction. He imagined perhaps, that as he was against the wall, they were going to perform some kind of gentle rite. To take his picture with a box, like the other man who, he now realised, had not meant to hurt him. He had not much time to wonder, for the militiamen pointed their rifles at him and he fell, pierced by a score of bullets, the smile just waning from his half-hidden face.

Soon Mohamed would be wandering in his Paradise in search of Mahomet, to ask for the solution of the riddle: "Will you tell me, oh great and wise Prophet, why they were so kind as to take the trouble to try to heal me if they had meant all the time to kill me in the end?"

* * * * *

That night the "caids" (chieftains) of the "mehalla" (company of Arab troops) waited in vain in their tent for Mohamed to serve them mint-tea as usual. A patrol watched and waited all through the night. At the break of dawn, when all hope of finding him was lost, one of the Caid, resting in a corner of the tent and smoking a pipe of hashish, was dreamily evoking the splendid figure of the lost Mohamed, who was a valiant young warrior, for many years his loyal henchman, and more like his brother-at-arms than a servant. Both had been born in the hamlet of Ait el Jens on the Southern side of the Atlas mountains where the courageous blue-eyed Berber warriors made war from



birth to death with the Desert nomads. Mohamed and the Caid who had drunk milk from the same breast, had never been separated from one another. They had fought together ever since they were youngsters; first to counter the raids made by the hungry inhabitants of the Sahara who wished to take possession of the fertile meadows of the Sus and the Nun, afterwards, under the Blue Sultan who led them from victory to victory before Marrakeech and, still later, in the chivalrous encounters between the warlike tribes of the Bu Amaran; and finally in the disastrous campaign against the French, that for four years had kept them on the run until they were forced to retreat across the Draa river to the boundary of the Desert.

When the Spanish soldiers had taken possession of the Ifny territory, soon after the advent of the Republic had spared the Berber warriors the hard necessity of having to take refuge in the Sahara in their flight from the victorious French army, those indomitable fighters had, with great pleasure, taken up service with the Spanish soldiers who offered them not only a possibility of revenge on the French, but good money in payment as regular colonial troops and, above all, new rifles and plentiful ammunition.

The Spanish soldiers who had occupied Ifny were controlled by fascist officers who were plotting against the republican régime, so that when the 1936 rebellion broke out, they told the Berber warriors that they must go to Spain to fight against the reds who were

being helped by France and Russia. These born fighters, loyal as are all good Moslems to pacts of friendship, accepted gladly the chance to fight for the rebel cause on Spanish soil.

Equipped with splendid new weapons of German origin, they were shipped to Spain where they saw, for the first time, great cities with large houses and shop windows displaying untold riches. The watchmakers' shops containing thousands of watches and the jewellers' shops full of golden objects and precious stones of every kind glittered and sparkled before their dazzled eyes, conjuring up to their simple minds visions of abundant booty which they hoped would materialise. The Berbers kept their promise of loyalty and, under an iron discipline, fought with great courage against the enormous masses of red soldiers hurled against them. But the reds had not learned the art of war and either let themselves be killed like heroes, or ran away like herds of frightened deer.

Proud of their brilliant rôle of "conquistadores" they allowed themselves to be made a fuss of by the women and by those whom they called the "Hebrews" . . . timid people unfitted to take up arms. Wherever they passed they were the object of special acclamations. The women presented them with religious pictures and scapularies which they accepted with the supreme indifference of true believers. Allah was God and Mahomet was his prophet! Had any of the ladies who so kindly fêted and fussed over the Berber warriors

guessed at their innermost thoughts and true feelings, their Christian and civilised souls would have been truly horrified.

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The Caid, saddened by the disappearance of his beloved Mohamed, left the tent where the other Moorish officers were asleep and strolled up to the mountain; the light of the moon pierced the outspread branches of the pine-trees dappling the earth with deep shadows. The thin air of the Sierra Gredos caressed and stimulated the dark-skinned Caid's hot brow. The camp fires had been extinguished one after the other. Only one ray of light was left in the whole camp. It shone in the tent of the European officers, and the Caid, attracted by the light and noise, walked slowly in that direction. The officers were celebrating the victory of the day and were toasting their next triumph. Their bursts of laughter and their songs added to the Caid's sadness. The African warrior stood near the tent for a long time thinking deeply, and the joyful sounds and the strange speech sank into his dormant consciousness, arousing a strong emotion of disdain and hatred towards these alien people. Dumbly he resented their drinking and singing to celebrate victories bought so dearly with the blood of his brother warriors while he wandered alone and disconsolate, his heart grieving over the loss of his loyal friend Mohamed, whose death only he would mourn.

Someone lifted the flap covering the entrance to the tent and came outside. The Caid tried to hide himself, but had no time to do so.

"What on earth are you doing here, Caid?" asked the officer.

"I was sad and deep in thought," he answered.

"Well, come in and drink with us. That will sweep away the cobwebs."

Another officer came out and they insisted on taking him with them. They offered him wine which he refused.

"The Caid is sad," explained an officer, "because this afternoon the reds hunted down one of his most valiant 'mejaznies,' Mohamed the courageous."

At this the Caid nodded his head in assent and smiled ceremoniously, as though trying to excuse himself for his weakness.

"Never mind, Caid . . . forget it. Drink a little, that will help you."

"Leave him alone," said an officer of the Foreign Legion who was already well-soused. "The Moors are a lot of fools, they won't chase away troubles by drinking. . . . They don't know how good it is to drown sorrow in booze. One of the Caid's men has been killed and until he is avenged he will not be happy again. Am I not right, Caid? You want revenge, don't you? Well, you won't have to wait long . . . to-morrow at the latest. How many ears of red militiamen do you want my men to cut off to-morrow

in memory of your loyal Mohamed? How many did you say? A thousand? Ten thousand? Do you want us to bring you the ears of the President of the Republic? Don't be so sad, Caid! You shall have them. I swear it. On my honour Caid. On the honour of the Legion. . . . I swear it!"

And the Foreign Legion officer went on repeating this. He made a great fuss of the Berber warrior, toasted him glass in hand, his bloated face close to the noble and serene visage of the Caid, his lips puffed and his speech thick. The Caid sat unmoved, even when he felt the drunken officer's loathsome spittle spraying against his face.

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When it became evident that the vanguards of Moors and Legionaries had forced the mountain passes in a surprise attack and were invading the valleys, it was too late to organise any serious resistance. The only loyal forces were the local militias who were armed with all kinds of obsolete weapons. The news that the Moors and Legionaries had advanced, leaving behind them a trail of desolation and death without quarter, was brought by the villagers and peasants of the terrorised villages. The men were ready to resist to the end.

"Give us arms! Arms!" they shouted in despair.

But all was in vain, for there were no arms to give them. Masses of peasants armed with sticks, slings,

scythes and old sporting-guns were nevertheless ready to fight. At the last moment the Madrid Government sent a column of militiamen and the most courageous amongst the peasants and villagers joined their ranks eagerly.

"Comrade Commander," they asked, "let us join the troops."

"But you know I have no rifles for you. How are you going to fight?" answered the Commander.

"It doesn't matter; we will march behind the militiamen and pick up the rifles of those that fall."

Thus was organised a column intended to stop the advance of the Moors and Legionaries along the valley. Behind each man bearing a rifle there marched another man unarmed, who, with clenched fists, waited for the tragic opportunity of picking up a gun. History has seldom shown the spectacle of a people more determined than these to resist an invader. Moved by a ferocious hatred for their foes, these peasants of the heart of Castile, these shepherds and lumbermen of the Sierras of Gredos, marched side by side, breast forward, so as to form a living wall against the advance of the colonial troops.

The heroic resistance collapsed with terrific slaughter, as it was foredoomed to do. Courage is not enough in modern warfare; efficient arms and iron discipline are main factors. The peasants were routed, but their stubborn resistance exasperated the enemy officers, who gave their men licence to ravage the valley,

spreading a devastating torrent of death and desolation. Groups of peasants and villagers sought sanctuary in the tortuous paths and caves afforded by the mountains, but even there they were found by the invaders and killed without mercy. No prisoners were taken, and until well into the night the pine woods in the mountains near Montreal resounded with the pitiless volleys of execution squads.

The officers of the victorious column began to concentrate on the principal square of the village. The last to arrive was the Caid. He was leading a small group of Moors with wide shining eyes and hanging jaws; their shoulders, bent under the weight of heavy burdens, indicated that they had been looting to their hearts' content. Some had their naked arms covered as far as the elbow with wrist-watches taken from the dead militiamen, for the puerile and barbarous covetousness of the Moors was particularly attracted to timepieces of all kinds—a reaction perhaps, to the undivided eternal flow of unreckoned hours in their desert camps and mountain solitudes.

When the Caid approached the group of officers and stood to attention, giving the military salute with his right hand touching his fez, he saw the Foreign Legion officer who, the previous night, had offered to avenge the death of Mohamed. He advanced towards him with outstretched arms. The officer patted him gaily on the back and said:

"Well done, Caid—you and your men have fought

like true Berbers. Don't think for a moment that I have forgotten to keep my promise. My men could not cut off the ears of the President of the Republic, at least not yet . . . but we got a good collection for you as a first instalment."

He called a batman who brought a bulging haversack which he took from him and threw at the feet of the Caid.

"There you are!" he laughed, "there is a good vengeance for the death of your 'mejazni'. . . . A hundred ears of marxists!"

On touching the ground the haversack fell half-open and out of it rolled some bloody unrecognisable lumps of human flesh.

* * * * *

The soldiers soon established law and order in the valley. Their methods were simple and drastic. The peasants who had survived returned cowed to their usual work. There were no more strikes nor quarrels over wages. Work from dawn to sunset, the traditional custom in the country-side, was re-enforced. Instead of the clenched fists they gave the open fascist salute. The Civil Guard were once more masters of the country-side whilst the fascists reorganised all the villages that came within the iron girdle of their new discipline. The prisons that had been opened to incarcerate the reactionaries were now used by fascists to imprison the reds.

After a few days the troops left that part of the country. The Caid and his men were sent to the Madrid front where they fought in the first line with the great courage, tenacity and resistance to the hardships of the campaign that made them the greatest asset of the rebel army. The Moors knew this and inwardly were very proud of it. Their vanity was satisfied. Spain, with her masses of "hebreos" incapable of putting up a fight, was falling before them. The valiant Berbers! An old instinct like an ancestral voice, a vehement desire for revenge unsatisfied for generations, was now urging them on. The Arabs and Berbers, moved by these obscure impulses, charged in the open against the trenches of the reds and were happy. The mere fact that they could kill infidels and be praised for it by those hated Europeans who had subdued Islam, made risking their lives worth while and, in the bargain, they had the proud delight of seeing them run in panic before their overwhelming onslaughts.

So the Caid and his men advanced almost without resistance to the suburbs of Madrid. There they entrenched, ready for a last sally on the coveted capital. From the hill where they awaited the zero hour they could see the compact mass of buildings basking in the clear light so often painted by Velazquez. Madrid offered itself to their astonished eyes like a fantastic city of the Thousand and One Nights. When they looked at it through the veils of

dusk and saw how that immense expanse resembled a starry sky with its myriads of lights, they revelled in the thought that the world of treasures within the city was at their mercy, as a well-deserved reward for their courage. A satanic pride filled the hearts of these warriors from the Rif Yebala and the Atlas, who had always been ready to kill or be killed for the mere conquest of a miserable "aduar," a meadow where their meagre cattle could graze, or for the trickle of water that sprung from an oasis of the Sahara. The conviction that they, the wretched Kabils who had been systematically humiliated and vanquished by the superior fire-arms of the Europeans, were now the deciding factor in the fate of that great city that was waiting to be stormed and plundered, increased their ardour and enthusiasm twofold.

The first day of the storming of Madrid the Moors attacked with an overwhelming fury. Displayed in open formation, leaning forward and howling to kill, they advanced under an inferno of fire from the enemy. Twice they had to retreat under the hail of bullets from the red trenches, and each time they returned to the attack with more determination and rage. At last they reached the first-line trenches of the republican militiamen and there, for the first time, the barbaric African warriors found their foe standing ready to fight them in an epic hand-to-hand duel. There, also for the first time, the Berbers received what to them was an appalling surprise: the fighters of the

proletariat of the great European city did not run away. That day the Moors learned, to their cost, that not all Spaniards were miserable "hebreos" and that in that Spain which in their haughty superiority as warriors they disdained, there existed a soul as hard as steel with a vital impetus that could be compared to the devastating hurricane of the Desert.

During the storming of the trenches the Caid surprised a militiaman who, crouching behind some sand-bags near a breach in the trenches made by the explosion of a shell, was lying in ambush ready for the Moors who might try to invade the trenches by that breach. He was a tall strong fellow, dressed in the blue overalls of a mechanic, his shirt-sleeves rolled up baring brawny arms which had been made strong and muscular by the constant use of the forging hammer. Holding his rifle tightly by the barrel he wielded it with great force above his head. A radiant expression of mad joy was on his face and every time he brought down his rifle, like a mighty club, on the head of an unsuspecting Moor who tried to force his way into the trenches, he felt proud of his unerring adroitness. With every mortal blow he jumped for joy like a child and, with the fluent lingo of a true son of the lower quarters of Madrid, he let flow a torrent of words with which he urged himself on to his death-dealing job.

"Ole! Viva! there goes another darkie," he shouted. "Another Moor for Allah's Paradise. God-speed, my friend! That was a good one, eh? . . . Come on,

damn you. . . . I want more heads to smash. . . . Come on, come on. . . . Ole! Viva! . . . There it is. . . . Smack . . . another one! !"

The cunning Caid approached stealthily from behind and, when he was within striking distance, he charged and thrust his bayonet into the militiaman's back, at the same time as the latter raised the butt of his rifle to bring it down on another Berber's head. Neither the Moor nor the militiaman missed. Another victim fell to the mighty club, but the militiaman was pierced by the Moor's bayonet. As he toppled, his head fell against the chest of his victim and thus they fell together like skittles and lay on top of one another. The militiaman made a desperate effort to raise himself, but he fell back and this time his face was pressed against the face of the Moor. Their veiled eyes met and the look of terror and agony on the twisted features of the dying Moor inspired him to find strength to jeer his last defiant sarcasm:

"Good gracious, if you are not an ugly son of a bitch!" then resigning himself to die cheek to cheek with his enemy, he murmured without bitterness:

"Well, we both got it this time, friend! . . . Bad luck old blackamoor, eh?"

Over their dead bodies the Moors entered the trench, while the Caid kept the opening clear. The trench was speedily evacuated by the reds who were once more on the run. The Berbers had won another victory.

But the stout resistance of the militiamen had only

failed on that spot where the Moors had attacked in force. The rest of the republican lines withstood the advance and the Foreign Legionaries, the Phalangists and the Requetes forming the rest of Franco's army, failed to break the spirit of Madrid's defenders. The advance made by the Moors formed a dangerous salient and there was the possibility of their being cut off at any moment. The commanding officer of that sector, trusting to the courage and resourcefulness of the Moors, neglected to rectify the line in that direction and they were left for the night in possession of the trench they had captured.

But the reds gave them no peace and kept firing at them all night. At dawn the Government artillery found the range and opened a terrific and relentless fire on the Moors who, seeing that they were being killed like flies, tried to advance and were mown down from the enemy trenches which they tried vainly to reach. No reinforcements came to their aid, and the Caid gave the order to retreat.

It was too late, however. The Moors had been caught in the pincers of two simultaneous and well-directed flank attacks, and the survivors were forced to surrender. The group now consisted of some thirty men and they swarmed round the Caid while the reds continued killing them off, one after another. They had no more resistance left in them and the Caid, realising this, tried once more to force a way. He urged his men forward but he was the only one with

enough courage to advance towards what was certain death. Suddenly from the red trenches, came the order "Cease fire!" Only a stray shot here and there was heard and a militiaman jumped out of the trench and, covering the Caid with his pistol, shouted:

"Give yourself up or I shoot!"

The Caid, with the fatalism of his race, believed this moment was ordained and, throwing down his rifle, put up his arms and went forward towards the enemy trench, still covered from behind by the militiaman's pistol.

To capture the rest of the group of Moors was easy enough. They were surrounded by militiamen and driven like dejected cattle into the trench. Their morale had failed them all of a sudden. Their eyes, so fierce and proud before, looked at their captors with the same sad and beaten look of wild animals caught in a trap.

One of the Moors, in order to spare himself any more nasty jabs with a rifle-butt, lifted his left fist and gave the red salute, shouting at the same time:

"Long live republica. . . . Me red, me your side!"

"Moros estar reds, we all be reds!" shouted the other Moors, hoping thus to save their skins. The militiamen found it a great source of entertainment to see these African warriors declaring themselves reds and lifting their clenched fists above their heads and shouting, in the only Pidgin-Spanish they knew, that they were the most devoted of all republicans.

One militiaman, with a face as hard as a hatchet and wings of grey hair on his temples, approached the Caid, who had not spoken a word nor clenched his fist, and asked him:

"And you? . . . You 'estar rojo' also. . . . One of us, eh?"

The Caid fixed his clear eyes on him and answered:

"No, me estar a Moor."

"Kill him! Let us shoot the swine!" shouted the militiamen around him. One of them pressed the muzzle of his rifle against the Caid's breast, but the grey-headed veteran pushed the weapon away:

"Why are you going to kill him? . . . Are you going to murder him because he at least is honest?"

"I will kill him just because I want to," answered a militiaman in a fury—"And I will kill you too, if you are not careful."

At this moment the old man went for the other, pistol in hand, and a nasty quarrel ensued between those who sided with him and those who backed his opponent. The trouble was only ended by the swift intervention of the more level-headed and it was decided to take the prisoners to the nearest commanding officer, but it was hard work to prevent them being killed on the way. At the commanding officer's post they were submitted to a severe questioning and later on it was decided that they should be taken to Madrid in a lorry.

Amongst the militiamen sent to guard the Moors was

the veteran who had saved the Caid from certain death. He was a man of about fifty years of age, tall, lean and well-built. During the weeks he had been in the trenches he had grown a beard which, together with his bronzed skin, gave him a certain physical similarity to the Caid. Seated next to each other in the lorry one would have said that both belonged to the same race. It was as though the intervening eight hundred years had been wiped away—here was a man obviously descended from the time when the Moor was all-powerful and ruled over the Iberian Peninsula.

When the lorry entered the main Madrid streets the astonished Moors got up to stare at the big city. The Caid, who had dreamt of entering Madrid in triumph, did not move and hardly looked about him. But he took the opportunity, while he was sure that his men would not notice the gesture, to catch hold of the militiaman's hand and say to him:

"Moor be thankful."

The militiaman, deeply touched, tried to appear indifferent and avoided the Caid's eyes.

"They will kill you, Moor. Do not hope for mercy."

The militiaman tried to make his meaning clear by drawing one of his fingers across his throat. The Caid remained impassible and answered:

"Never mind, Moor be thankful to you."

The lorry with its load of prisoners had arrived at its destination in the centre of Madrid. It was five o'clock in the afternoon and at that time the central

streets were filled with the usual animated and noisy crowds in spite of the enemy at the very gates. The Moors, who stood in a compact group in the lorry, made an unexpected side-show for the crowd. Soon the lorry was surrounded by people of all kinds. The Madrid street urchins and hooligans passed amusing and caustic remarks about their personal appearance. When the lorry stopped at last in the Gran Via, a sea of humanity surged round the prisoners eager to see them, to touch them, to say something to them.

They had arrived in the nick of time to uplift the morale of the people. Someone ordered the driver of the lorry to drive round the streets and stop at certain places, and everywhere the Moors went they were surrounded by crowds who rejoiced to see the prisoners lifting their clenched fists to give the red salute.

"These are only a sample of what we took," said a typical braggart. "We have captured more than ten thousand of them!"

"They have revolted against Franco," said another Madrileño. "They have cut Franco's throat, you know, and joined us."

"Of course, the Moors are a lot of bolsheviks. . . . Is that not so, Mustafa?" said a "chula"—a woman of the people—smiling in a friendly way at the prisoners who, by this time, were rather confused in their minds at the unexpected reception they were getting. They thought that all they had to do was to shout still louder:

"Viva Republica!" "Vivan rojos!"

There were some in the crowd, however, who were less friendly. Some grumbling old woman with a good growth of hair on her upper lip, or some sullen-faced militiaman, said, on seeing the Moors:

"The thing to do with that crowd of murderers is to shoot them in the back."

To this there was always someone who replied:

"Those who brought them to Spain are the ones who ought to be shot like dogs. The fascists, those are the real murderers."

The fact was that the Moors did not provoke a great deal of exasperation in the people of Madrid. All the good-natured Madrileños saw were unwilling instruments used by the fascists. They did not realise how the Moors would have killed and looted without mercy; they looked so quiet and docile. They looked down on them as though they were poor beasts enticed from their own country on a fool's errand. They felt a kind of commiseration for them and when they saw the prisoners lifting their clenched arms in a tragic-comic gesture, they offered them peanuts as if they were monkeys in the cages in the Madrid zoo.

Knowing very little of the truth, as is always the case with the masses, they would willingly have let the Moors go free. But war has its inflexible laws and the Spanish Civil War had reached a terrible pinnacle of cruelty. The death of the Moors had been decreed in the name of the people, whose opinion

was not asked. When night began to fall and the streets were deserted by the swarming day-time crowds, the Moors were taken to a lonely spot in the Madrid country-side. The exhibition for propaganda purposes had come to an end and the moment had arrived to get rid of that useless load of unwanted humanity.

The Caid, who had remained all the time seated near the red veteran who was guarding him, caught his hand again and asked him:

"Now they kill Moors, eh?"

The militiaman assented, nodding his head gravely.

"Allah is good and Mahomet is his prophet," was the only comment made by the Moor.

After a while the militiaman said:

"I would like you to live. You are a real man. But I can do nothing for you."

"Me sabe, me understand," replied the Caid, again pressing gently the hand of the militiaman. Each knew without words the sympathy that existed between them, that mutual recognition which comes unknown and unwanted but cannot be ignored.

"Moor sabe that you be friend and no want to kill Moor, but must. Moor has to kill also. They be things of war . . . and things of men, inshallah! Allah alone is great. May his name be praised for ever."

They were placed, unresisting, in a row against a wall and mown down like blades of grass at the time of harvest.

"MASSACRE"

EVEN in the morning light the bomb thrown from an aeroplane leaves behind a luminous meteoric wake. The tuning-fork of space vibrates on being struck and it feels as if the very entrails were torn from one's inside, as though one were being turned inside out. The sickening sensation starts in the pit of the stomach, and the ear-drums too sensitive for the commotion, hurt as though pierced with a hot knife. That is all. Meanwhile the silvery bird that laid the brilliant, fiery egg flashes away and soon is nothing more than a dot in the immensity of space. . . .

Then the tragedy starts to dawn on those below. Where did that one fall? Nobody knows for certain, but every one has a theory. The bomb fell very near; just a couple of blocks away . . . perhaps at the other end of the street. . . . As a matter of fact it always happens that it is further off than it was thought at first. The crowd hastens to the spot. The militiamen bar the way, making a cordon with their rifles, and the curious have to be satisfied with seeing from a distance the broken glass, the shattered windows and balconies, the railings twisted from their sockets and flung in the middle of the street, and the heavy metal doors of the shops torn from their hinges and hanging

like rags. The crowd, with morbid apprehension, senses blood and looks for the arrival of the ambulances. A bomb always gathers a crop of victims. When the ambulance-men pick up the torn remains, the red mass of flesh and rags that was a woman or a child, the multitude trembles with horror. When the victim on the stretcher is a man the onlookers show no emotion, for they seem to consider this as nothing untoward. All emotional capacity has its reactions; there is a limit beyond which is breaking point, and there seems to be a system imposed by nature as to just how far one can go. In time of war nature is less prodigal.

Madrid is a town of gamblers. Every month the state provides the people several times with the thrill of a well-administered lottery. Every Madrileño, every Spaniard in fact, hopes to wake up a rich man, especially at Christmas time, when everyone hopes to become a multi-millionaire by virtue of the fifteen million pesetas of the big prize to be won on this occasion. Every family in Madrid hopes this lottery prize will solve its personal economic problems. The possibility of a bomb falling in a Madrid home was also now a kind of negative lottery. The prize consisted in escaping the bombs. The air-raids on Madrid were like so many lottery draws, and the prizes as manifold as the thousands that were not killed with each bomb that fell. This mentality explains the gaiety observed in the faces of the people after every raid, when they

realised that this time at least they had not received death as a prize from the lottery of the sky; yet knowing that to-morrow there would be another fateful draw. Between the air-raids the Madrileños continued to live with joyful intensity. Everyone said to himself: "My own personal chance is so remote," and continued to drink greedily from the cup of life. But the sky-lottery, "la loteria del cielo" as it was called, became very prodigal in prizes and the population became more and more scared. The people began to learn the art of taking cover. The basements and cellars of houses were converted into communal living-rooms and well-stocked with mattresses, bedding, stoves and candles. In every house a night watch was organised, each member taking it in turn to wake up the sleepers at the slightest alarm. All window-panes in shops and rooms were plastered with strips of paper. On one occasion a bomb fell in a garage and destroyed fifty cars and from that day all cars were left outside the garages, lined up in front of the houses like so many stray dogs. The raiders succeeded in dropping a bomb so near the Prime Minister's house that pieces of glass and mortar fell into the plate of soup he was eating. The cellars of the public buildings were converted into offices for ministers and high officials and the cellar of the Home Office boasted a ministerial office furnished with red plush, gilded rococo chairs and the hard stone floor was covered with a worn carpet, while the humidity of the dripping walls was dissimulated

behind valuable tapestries brought there from the magnificent state-rooms above.

On the whole, Madrid behaved well and even cheerfully under the constant strain. A well-known university professor died from fright at the café table where he was sitting when a bomb exploded in the neighbourhood; dozens of women were taken in hysterics or paralytic fits to the first-aid stations soon after the alarm was sounded; unscrupulous people rushed to take cover in the Underground, trampling over women and children and pushing aside mothers with babies in their arms who were running along the streets to find shelter. Half-naked children, snatched from their beds and hurriedly wrapped up, were crying piteously with fear, sleepiness and cold. But all the suffering and sorrow, all the terrible carnage produced by the raids and the ever-increasing severity of the bombardments, from the air could not break the spirit nor suppress the humorous resignation of what has proved to be the most senseless and heroic town in the world.

* * * *

Some, however, could not endure with equanimity, and yet these were not the weakest nor the most defenceless. There was a group of militiamen organised under the impressive title of Revenge Patrol, self-appointed to carry out what they pompously called "The new revolutionary order of things." They invested themselves with authority to undertake vigilance work and investigations for public safety.

The Government were powerless to interfere with their activities. It was this group of stalwarts who reacted with more fury and ferociousness than anyone else against the air raids. They took possession of one of the smartest social clubs of Madrid and there, sunk in luxurious armchairs, gnashed their teeth and racked their brains to devise horrifying reprisals, while the alarm sounded in the sleeping town and explosions indicated the presence of the enemy in the skies.

"We must make a terrible example of that scum. No matter how bestially stupid they are they will have to realise that each bomb they drop on Madrid will kill more of their own people than of ours. This is the only effective measure we can take to counter their attacks," said a militiaman, pacing the room from end to end and carrying an enormous automatic pistol.

"The most effective thing to do, if only those cursed Russian aeroplanes would arrive, would be to chase away Franco's Capronis."

"How many aeroplanes have we got to defend Madrid?" asked another militiaman.

"I think we still have five in all," answered Valero, a Communist youth of the university type who also armed with a rifle, was presiding over the gathering of militiamen. He was a typical example of the intellectual revolutionary who had sprung up during Primo de Rivera's dictatorship, when the universities of Spain produced thousands of his kind. Valero did

not form part of the Revenge Patrol. He maintained constant contact with the group, but the part he played in their activities was not well defined.

"And the five aeroplanes we possess," he kept on saying, "are no match for those triple-engine Italian and German machines. Ours haven't a ghost of a chance. Our aviators have died like flies, and the foreign pilots have already said that unless they are given more modern and more powerful aeroplanes they will not go up any more. To go up is, in fact, madness. This morning when I went to the Home Office I saw the interpreter of the English Volunteer Aviators there, getting his papers in order to go back to his own country."

"The interpreter? Why?"

"Because he has lost his job through lack of clients. All the Englishmen have died fighting, one after another. They formed a squadron of volunteers and fought heroically. Men of the real bull-dog breed."

"It's no use," said the first militiaman, "we shall never be able to overpower the Italian and German airmen. Take it from me that my idea is the best. For each victim of the air raids we shall shoot five or, if necessary, ten people. In Madrid there are fascists in plenty to choose from."

The silence of the group of militiamen spelt consent. The dozen who formed the Revenge Patrol considered this ferocious reprisal justified, and they would have been astounded if anyone had tried to convince them

that what they considered a natural thing was nothing but criminal monstrosity. The war, in four months of ferocious fighting, had frequently produced such distortions of mind. Life had completely lost its values. The men who, on July 18th, 1936, had abandoned their ordinary lives to storm the Montana barracks of Madrid where the military had started the rebellion, and later fought against Franco's armies on the different fronts, had brought back to the city the barbaric frame of mind induced by life in the trenches; the cruel ferocity of men who, having experimented with death had learnt to kill as a matter of course, and were ready to put into practice what they had learnt whenever they could do so with impunity. In proportion to fear, cruelty was manifested. The gauge stood high! The men who formed the sinister patrols which committed all kinds of atrocities were recruited from those militiamen who, not being courageous enough to remain at the front, took advantage of the fact that there was no authority to control them, and returned to the capital bent on a self-imposed mission of establishing a régime of terror by clamouring that the revolution had to take its course and that the Government was not severe enough. They made it their business to see to it that a reckless terrorism was put into practice. Being terrified themselves, they knew very well how to play their part. Deserting from the fronts they sought refuge in the different organisations formed within the political

parties to supervise the Government, which was not considered strong enough. The Government feared these organisations and yet was powerless to stop them. Each one of those terrorising patrols was led by an adventurer or, in some cases, a real bandit chief. It often happened that the leader was a narrow-minded theorist with a heart of ice, who sincerely believed that the revolutionary creed should be based on reckless terrorism and exhorted his followers to commit the most ghastly crimes in the name of the cause.

Enrique Arabel was leader of the Revenge Patrol, a man no better than a beast of prey and a dissolute shirker from the discipline of the communist party, he had placed himself at the head of a handful of reckless men and acquired a sinister prestige. Arabel flouted Government authority, defied cabinet ministers, and imposed his will on the terrorised Committees of the different political parties. He ignored issues, repudiated responsibility and was an absolute tyrant. Valero, the university undergraduate and member of the United Youth Parties of the Left, carried out with cautiousness and two-faced treachery, the difficult task of bringing some kind of political control to bear over that uncontrollable force of men who accepted no ruling or curb on their animal instincts and passions and who, in the name of the people, used their guns to settle all arguments. Arabel, the undisputed leader of the patrol, would have liked to get rid of Valero but he knew that the Communist Party was behind the man and he

realised that the revolutionary prestige and power he and his men enjoyed, would be gone the day they openly broke with the Communists who, without showing that they had anything to do with Arabel's terrorising activities, were keeping an eye on them and using them for their own political ends. . . .

The air raid on Madrid was over, half an hour had elapsed since the bombers flew off. An over-zealous militiaman who imagined that he saw, at two or three thousand metres high, a speck that looked like an aeroplane, discharged his pistol at it with a superfluous and puerile gesture of defiance. Those senseless gunmen sincerely believed that hunting down aeroplanes with a pistol was a possible job and after each shot they would turn to the onlookers and, with a great deal of gesticulation, say:

"There! Did you see? I missed it by a few yards. What a pity!"

Arabel and his men were pondering over the vengeance they were going to take into their own hands that very night; the enemy must be taught a terrible lesson. Valero, who seemed more calm than the rest, was listening in silence to the criminal plans of the Patrol as if he were hearing some fantastic proposition which it would be impossible to put into practice. Experience had shown him, however, that these men were quite capable of carrying out their terrible threats.

One of the militiamen who had been acting as sentinel in the hall came in and spoke to Arabel:

"There is a woman downstairs who wishes to make a formal charge against some fascists."

"Idle nonsense, I am sure," said Valero.

"She says that she has proofs of counter-revolutionary activities in the case of a major who sometimes gathers round him other officers of the army for mysterious conversations."

"Bring her here!" ordered Arabel.

The woman shown in by the militiaman was young and handsome and expensively over-dressed. She was plump and affected a coy manner and the air of an ingénue. She looked as though she had dressed hurriedly yet it was easy to see that she took great pride in her personal appearance.

"I have come," she said, bursting into a torrent of words, "to denounce Don Eusebio Gutierrez, a major in the artillery, as a dangerous fascist."

"How do you know he is a fascist? Have you any proofs?"

"As many as you like. Only half an hour ago, while the rebel planes were bombing Madrid, he was in my house with two of his fascist friends and the moment they heard the alarm they shouted joyfully, 'Our friends are here again. Let us salute them!' and the three of them stood at attention with uplifted hands. What more do you want than that?"

"How do you happen to know this man?" asked Valero.

"He has been my . . . well . . . my friend, for a

long time," said the plump little woman blushing. "I am an orphan and he has been my protector. I called him my godfather, but during the last few months he has really treated me abominably. He is a dangerous fascist, I tell you. The day of the rebellion he was in my house, I saw him firing his pistol on the people from my very window."

"Then why did you not denounce him before?"

"I was afraid of him."

"And don't you fear him now?"

"I don't care what happens to me now. I am desperate. He's a mean old devil who treats me abominably."

"Did you quarrel this afternoon?"

"Yes."

"And you say he is a major on active service?"

"Yes, he is. Only this morning he received his pay. I happened to know it, just by chance, you know."

"He was paid and apparently never gave you a peseta. Is not that so? Wasn't that the reason for your quarrel?" asked Valero. He rose from his chair and turned his back on the young woman without waiting for her answer.

At this she flew into a furious rage, declaring that she was a decent girl and a true republican. She had come to denounce a traitor and she was offered insulting remarks and innuendoes as a reward for her zeal. Her friend was a dangerous fascist. He had mysterious meetings with other officers in a house

in Hortaleza Street where he spent most of his nights.

"He is there now for sure," she added.

"Perhaps he has another pretty little girl friend there, eh?"

The young woman made a face and shrugged her shoulders haughtily, as though to express her complete indifference. Arabel made a note of the name of the man and of the address in Hortaleza Street.

"We will have to investigate, anyhow," Valero remarked.

"Don't let us forget that the accusation may be false, nothing more than idle bedroom scandal. I think that this young woman should be kept here until we find out exactly what the real truth is."

Arabel took a good look at the plump little partridge of a woman and thought that Valero had made an excellent suggestion.

"Yes, I agree. The best thing will be for her to spend the night here."

She protested, although not very vigorously, and two well set-up young militiamen took her to the luxuriously appointed bar and gave her a strong cocktail, followed by several others.

* * * * *

They found the old major in a sordid pension in Hortaleza Street. The landlady gave him away at once and took the militiamen to the room where he was asleep, so wrapped up in bed-clothes that only

part of his yellow face and his tobacco-stained long drooping moustache could be seen. He awoke and sat up in bed with a jerk of premonition. In answer to the questions they put to him roughly, he gave some vague explanations as to why he was in that house. It was easily deducted that he was in the habit of leaving his own home at night, for fear of the patrols who visited marked houses in their search for suspects. He had imagined that in the Hortaleza Street pension he could rest a little without danger. Thousands of people in Madrid and other Spanish cities lived in constant fear of the dreaded nocturnal visits paid to their homes by the Dawn Patrols. Every soldier, from the rank of sergeant upwards, was a suspected fascist. General Mola had said that, besides the four columns of rebel troops marching on the capital, there was inside the town another column, the "Fifth Column," ready to act at the most opportune moment for co-operation with the attackers. On few occasions in the history of mankind have idle words been the direct cause of so many deaths. Each time the militiamen in search of suspects were confronted by proofs of innocence that might have spared a life, some one mentioned the "Fifth Column" and, proof or no proof, the suspected person was dragged before the firing squad to be mowed down at dawn in the open spaces around Madrid.

"He surely belongs to the Fifth Column," said one of the militiamen, pointing to the major. That decided

his fate. He was told to dress and as he was doing so in clumsy haste he kept muttering over and over that he was loyal to the Republic and to the people. Very tall and thin, he looked like a crestfallen and dejected Don Quixote; he was a comic spectacle in his loose-fitting pants and vest. His wretched appearance did not move the militiamen to pity. They kept him covered with their pistols and urged him to hurry up and finish dressing. When that was done, they marched him to a waiting car and started off in the direction of some fields on the outskirts of Madrid. Faced with death and realising that it was useless to try to justify himself, the old major managed to recover both calm and dignity. The car stopped a mile or so outside the city. He was pushed out and taken over to a cluster of trees. His steps were firm and decided, he marched to his doom with head erect.

"It is not necessary to go any further," he told them in a tone of command.

He went and stood with his back against a tree and would not allow anyone to come near him. One of the militiamen went behind him, pistol in hand, eager to finish him off with a shot in the back of the head, but the major saw him and commanded: "Wait!"

He faced the small group of militiamen. "'Shun! he ordered. . . . 'Take aim!"

The militiamen, taken aback, fell in and did as they were ordered. They raised their rifles and levelled them at the old man who, after lifting

his right arm and shouting all with his might "Arriba España," gave the order to fire.

He felt the shots whizz past his head. His legs, however, were pierced by a couple of bullets. He fell on his knees but gathered enough strength to stand erect and, banging his fists against his chest, shouted once more:

"Here! Here! Aim at the heart, you sons of bitches!"

They left him where he fell. Long and thin, with his clothes rumpled, he looked like a grotesque scarecrow brought down by the wind.

"The old crock faced death with courage," commented one of the militiamen on the way back to Madrid.

"Are you satisfied now that he was a fascist?" remarked another of the men.

"There are thousands like him in the Capital. We shall have to round them up properly and shoot the lot," Arabel summed up indifferently.

When they returned to the club they found the plump little woman perched on one of the bar stools, still in the company of the two good-looking youngsters; liquor and the competitive courting of the Don Juans had caused her round cheeks to flush. She looked like a badly-painted, cheap doll. When she saw Arabel she came down from her bar perch unsteadily and, with a tipsy leer, asked him:

"Well? Have you been able to find that awful old wretch?" She smiled an irresponsible smile and went on. . . . "I would hate anything to happen to him . . .

but a good scare will do him no harm, the old fool. He is very arrogant and thinks that there is no man in the world capable of tackling him. I would have preferred you to box his ears in my presence. I would like you to force him to beg my pardon and then let him go. After all, although he is a fascist, he is not such a bad old boy. . . . I would really hate anything to happen to him on my account . . ."

Valero, who was listening to the inconsequent burblings of the woman, felt a mad desire to batter her head in with the butt of his pistol. He was sure that hers was absolutely empty inside, like the head of one of those china dolls turned out in mass production.

* * * * *

The arrest of the old major had set Arabel thinking. Madrid was full of such cases. Hundreds of retired officers, who pretended to be loyal to the Republic, were taking money from it while all the time they were ardent fascists awaiting their opportunity to fight for their cause against the people. The "Fifth Column" indeed! To hunt them down one by one, especially now when they were scared and in hiding, would be a slow and difficult task. The best plan would be to set a trap for the lot of them. The Government could do that but, like all governments, they feared radical measures and would not dare to act. Even if a convocation order was inserted in the Official Gazette . . . they would take no notice.

"They all attend the Ministry on pay day that much we do know. . . . Wait! . . . I have an idea. We could trap them! They might be called together on the pretext that the arrears which we know are due to them are going to be paid."

"The Government will never do that."

"But we could do it ourselves. It is true that we might not be able to get the notice printed in the Gazette but we can manage to get it printed in the daily press. A cleverly-worded note summoning them say to the Ministry of Finance on a fixed day and at a certain hour, and notifying them that if they fail to attend they will be considered as rebels and will forfeit their pay in future. I am sure it would work. We can get hundreds of them like that."

The idea was put into practice that very night. On the following morning all the papers published the notice. It had been enough to go the round of the newspaper offices and to show a faked official order. The task was easy. No one dared to refuse them the use of their official seals.

At last, Arabel and his men were ready for the decoyed men. As they arrived they were detained and then taken to prison in a fleet of motor cars that had been specially obtained for the purpose. The trap had been well set; the officers were asked to queue up and were admitted in batches of three to an ante-room where, with the help of more forged official papers, the task of taking them to the waiting cars was

an easy one. The queue finally grew so long that some high officials of the Ministry became suspicious and, after finding out what the militiamen were doing, hurried to tell the waiting officers that no official notice had been issued, and that the best they could do was to get away without delay. Several managed to escape being taken to prison but over five hundred were caught in the militiamen's trap.

"We could have got at least two thousand. Those Government idiots have frustrated our plans. Anyhow, there are now five hundred casualties in the 'Fifth Column,' not a bad catch after all," exclaimed Arabel, rubbing his hands with glee.

"That is all very well," interrupted Valero, "but you are not going to tell me that they are all fascists."

"Of course they are, the whole lot of them. But, as a matter of fact, I have to talk to you about one or two cases," answered Arabel, beckoning Valero to follow him to the next room. Once inside Arabel turned the key and, facing Valero, said:

"I know very well that we must sacrifice all for the cause. For us there must be no exceptions. No one shall escape with impunity but sometimes events make one's conscience very uneasy, you know."

"The only conscience I have consists in being loyal to the revolution," answered Valero, sharply.

"That's very fine, man. I know you boast of being above suspicion and having no weakness. I am not trying to spare anyone in particular."

"Because you know very well that you would be wasting your time."

"I assure you, Valero, that the case I want to talk to you about has nothing to do with any sort of personal interest of mine. On the contrary, it concerns you. In the list of officers taken to prison by my men I read the name of one, Mariano Valero Hernandez, sixty years of age, retired major in the Infantry."

"He is my father," said Valero, without turning a hair.

"A fascist?"

"May be. I really do not know. I left home a long time ago and I have not seen him for ages."

"I understand. But anyhow, whether he is a fascist or not, I imagine that you must be eager to keep him out of trouble. I am willing to do you a good turn. The name of your father could be suppressed from the list before it is too late."

Valero, raging inwardly, realised at once what Arabel's real intentions were. He was sure that the leader of the patrol was making a good thing out of clandestine trafficking in prisoners, freeing those that could pay him an abundant ransom. Arabel knew that Valero would detect at any moment his underhand dealings and he wanted to buy his silence by offering him the freedom of his father. At the suggestion Valero frowned darkly and answered:

"My father's affairs do not concern me in the least. If he is a fascist that's his business and he will have

to suffer for it." And he turned his back disdainfully on the shady bargain-maker.

He went out into the street and wandered aimlessly about with his hands in his pockets, a cigarette drooping in the corner of his mouth. Towards evening the crowds in the principal streets were a striking contrast to the impressive emptiness of the rest of the town. The Puerta del Sol, the wide Alcala street, the very modern Gran Via, were crowded with a multitude of workers, militiamen, refugee peasants, provincials looking like fish out of water, and all sorts and conditions of people. They were all very unkempt and dressed in a strange assortment of garments. Some were standing in front of the jewellers' shop windows still full of gold, silver and precious stones, all of which, incredible as it may seem, had remained untouched during the terrifying period of mob-rule. They remained gaping open-mouthed, or drifted about contemplating the fashionable dress-shops in which there were to be seen costly wearing apparel and the latest Paris fashions.

It was beginning to get dark and the crowd, fearing the terrors of the night, had started to disperse. In one more hour there would not be a single soul in the darkened streets where the lamps threw their dim, lugubrious rays on a few straggling pedestrians.

Valero sought refuge in the Basque tavern where he usually had his meals. The clients had not yet begun to arrive but the place was mostly frequented by militiamen now. The proprietor had managed to

reserve a small back room for those clients that still paid with good old bourgeois money: aviators, officers, members of Parliament, foreign journalists, anti-fascist intellectuals and, here and there, some strange nondescript individuals.

When Valero arrived the dining-room was still empty. He sat down in a corner, ordered beer and found himself in that dazed state into which the man of action occasionally lapses. Presently there came in a wreck of a man who, with hesitating gait, dropped into a convenient chair in the opposite corner of the room and fell forward on to a table. He was a young man, thin and pallid, with long dangling arms and a fringe of wispy hair on his forehead; his turbid eyes stared at the floor, his head was sunk into his shoulders and he was panting for breath. Valero could see that his jaws were clenched and that he breathed with great difficulty, his nostrils dilating and that he was gasping for air, his face, when he raised it, was the picture of despair. Valero looked at him compassionately. It was a true and pathetic picture of superhuman effort, the plastic impersonation of weakness trying to overcome itself. He was sorry for the man, sorry for himself and sorry for all those who, like them, were making war, dying and being killed like heroes, beasts and martyrs and who, in reality, had neither heroic tendencies nor bad instincts nor the martyr's spirit of sacrifice and fanatic idealism.

After a while the stranger grew calmer. The waiter,

who was also looking at him with pity, said to Valero in a confidential tone:

"Every evening he comes from the trenches in the suburbs like this; he is a Frenchman who has come to Spain to fight for the revolution. He is the leader of a squadron of aeroplanes but he is not really an aviator. In his own country I think he was a poet or novelist or something of the kind."

The regular customers were now beginning to arrive. A group of anti-fascist intellectuals, amongst them Alberti the poet, who looked like a gigolo tango-dancer; Bergamin, with his dishevelled matted hair, had the air of a wise owl, and Maria Teresa Leon appeared like a robust Minerva, carrying a small revolver strapped to the belt at her thick waist. They surrounded the table of the wretched Frenchman and spoke to him pleasantly and the expression of despair lifted from his face and he managed to assume a forced and refined smile.

"Salud, Malraux."

"Salud, my friends."

The glimpse of the real man, weak and despairing, was once more replaced by the artificial mimic reacting, playing his part in the bizarre comedy of the living. The intellectuals debated brilliantly. Other jovial and optimistic diners arrived. Their appetites were magnificent and they drank with avidity. Those that had come straight from the trenches were the gayest.

Valero got up and went into the street where again

he wandered about in the darkness and solitude, interrupted by the occasional "halts!" of the watchful sentinels. He tramped up and down a long time before finally deciding to enter the hall of the convent which the militiamen had converted into a prison. He spoke to the sentinel on guard and followed the directions he gave. There, in a long narrow room, were a score of prisoners lying on some sacking. By the dim yellowish light of the only electric lamp in the room he saw what he was looking for. Sitting on the edge of the sacking stuffed with straw that served as a bed, was an old man; his head, sparsely covered with short, rough, grey hair, was bent over his chest and his long arms hung dejectedly between his legs. The old man looked up and seeing who it was his face lighted up with genuine pleasure and emotion.

"Hallo, father."

"Hallo, my boy."

"How are you?"

"Well I think you can see for yourself."

"I just came to ask if there was anything you needed?"

The old man shook his head. "No, I don't want anything, no, nothing."

"Shall I stay with you for a little while?"

"Yes do, sit down."

He made room for his son on the edge of the sacking.

They sat in silence. After a while the son fished a

packet of cigarettes from his pocket, handed one to his father, took another for himself and they both began to smoke.

As the young man smoked his cigarette he was thinking to himself:

"How long since my father allowed me to smoke for the first time in his presence? Three years? Five? Will he think it a lack of respect if I smoke now? And he began to think what strangers they had been and how little they had really known of one another. Could the breach be removed . . . could they ever know, ever understand each other? . . .

He cut short his train of thought and stared at the thin spiral of blue smoke. The old man who had lowered his head again was looking at him out of the corner of his eyes and thinking proudly:

"He is strong, my son, his generation is tougher than mine."

The comparison filled his heart with bitter resentment. He remembered his own youth when he was full of spirits, healthy and physically strong. Forty years ago he had entered the army as a soldier and volunteered to serve in the Cuban war and had dreamt of heroic actions, believing in the imperial destinies of Spain. Ah! in those days this whipper-snapper of a son of his would have been no match for him. But the Cuban campaign, the fever, the starvation, and the final humiliating defeat, had broken his spirit and made him just another human wreck. He had been sacrificed

to his country, his only consolation being that he was proud of his sacrifice. That is why he had stayed in the army, still worshipping the glorious myths that had destroyed his youth. He had spent a miserable life as an officer with scanty pay in small and dirty garrison towns. Wearing uniform and having to depend on an impoverished state were the crosses he had to bear; for he had lived among people who hated the military caste. He had always acted honourably throughout his life. When he became the father of a son he resolved to spare him that servitude in which no future or glory was left, so he sent him to the university to learn another profession. The son, however, learnt only to become a communist and now, when the hour for vindication had at last arrived, when a leader had been found in Franco and a new ideal had finally emerged from the embers of the burnt-up past, now when he sincerely believed that fascism was the sure road to a Spanish renaissance, that son of his barred the way and openly opposed him, setting up the insurmountable obstacle of youth and an iron will that was stronger than his own resentment.

The old man smoked on and took several nervous puffs at his cigarette, looking fixedly at his adversary. . . . Neither said a word. What was there to be said? They finally rose in silence, throwing away their stubs.

"Are you sure you don't need anything?"

"Quite sure."

They embraced and kissed with mutual tenderness. Blood is thicker than water. There are instincts that cannot be conquered.

"Adios," said the father.

And the son said, "Salud."

* * * * *

There was a great turmoil in the queue of women and children trying to get provisions. Apparently one of the militiamen placed there to keep order had tried to take liberties with some young women. Pushing them back into line he did so by placing his hands on their bosoms. . . . Militiaman or no militiaman, they were not going to stand for that. So loud was the noise and hullabaloo that, for a few moments, no one realised what had happened. There was a deafening explosion and some women fell to the ground. The others, panic stricken, scattered in all directions. Amongst the horrible mass of mangled humanity left on the pavement only one person was left standing. This was an old woman, her head covered by a black handkerchief, carrying a shopping basket in her hand, her only concern being to await the moment of her turn to get a few eggs or perhaps an ounce or two of meat. Taking advantage of the commotion she moved stealthily along the blood-stained wall until she reached the entrance of the shop, happy at the thought of being suddenly at the head of the queue.

So quickly had everything happened that no one

could give an account of it. Somebody said that the militiaman had shot at the women. Others, seeing so many women on the ground, said that a car full of fascists had passed at full speed and run them down and machine-gunned the rest. The militiamen said that it was evident that a bomb had been thrown. They were not sure who had thrown it, nor where it could have come from. Another said that he had seen the bomb fall from the roof of one of the neighbouring houses, and yet another, still more precise, pointed at one of the balconies crying: "I saw it! I saw it! . . . it came from that balcony, I'm sure." The militiamen, without asking for further evidence, started shooting at the front of that particular house.

After a time it dawned on all that they must be wrong. The bomb had fallen from the sky. The rebel aeroplanes flying over Madrid, unseen in the darkness of the night, had thrown not only that bomb but a score more in different parts of the capital. The raiders had flown very high, over three thousand metres in fact, and in the gloaming neither had been seen nor heard until it was too late. The bombs were small but terribly effective and had killed many people. Until then, the people had only feared the raids carried out by big bombing planes, and every time the alarm had been sounded to warn them. They did not yet know that in the morning a rebel aeroplane had destroyed the captive balloon from which the alarms were sounded.

About seven o'clock that evening the principal streets were full of people and each bomb had produced dozens of casualties. The hospitals and first-aid stations could not cope with them and there were queues at the doors of these buildings as big as those that collected to try to get provisions at the shops. As the night wore on the news became more concise and it was known that the number of victims was, in all, well over a couple of thousand.

A heavy cloud of evil premonition fell on the capital and every one had the sensation that the carnage was by no means finished. The inhabitants, in the throes of panic, sought shelter everywhere and soon the big city seemed dead . . . deserted. In certain places, however, life vibrated intensely and blind hatred and agitation for revenge grew like an overwhelming tide. The centres where the revolutionaries congregated were alive with horrifying plans of vengeance. Where the militiamen, workers, soldiers on leave, and other actors in the great drama congregated, a plot full of the venomous desire to kill, was hatched. A criminal idea germinated in all minds was rapidly taking shape. Outwardly Madrid seemed deserted, dead, but it had never lived so intently and with such overwhelming force and feeling as it lived now. The calmest heads began to feel the contagion and the last resistance to that criminal mass was vanquished. The turbid tide grew slowly towards its inevitable climax. The idea that mastered the city took shape and plasticity in

one word. Who pronounced it first? Who first shouted its burning syllables? Massacre! . . . for it soon resounded throughout the town, Massacre! . . . Massacre! . . . repeated like an echo of perdition and doom. Massacre! Massacre! Massacre! The ancestral cruelty of the Celtiberians gave a coarse and terrible quality to the sound of the word.

Massacre! . . . it was clamoured in an infernal chorus from thousands on thousands of throats until the word itself was lost and only its fiendish meaning remained. The idea had crystalised into the storming of the prisons to get at the hostages.

There was still some feeble opposition in one or two moderate organisation centres and the Government adopted the precaution of reinforcing the prison guards. A useless measure, however, because the very guards had been influenced by the tense atmosphere and also felt the tide of massacre sweeping them away from reason and duty.

At midnight all these waves of primitive instinct reached the apex of their surging, dominating, impulse. The militiamen patrols were concentrated at their headquarters and their leaders were eagerly urging them on to storm the prisons. Arabel gave secret instructions to his most dependable men and these left the club that was their private headquarters in small and scattered groups.

"Where are you sending your men?" inquired Valero.

"They are going to the San Ramon prison, to see

that the debt owing is paid in full. Do you understand? . . . They are going there to collect a debt!"

"I understand . . . but no political party has issued orders."

"We do not need any. The will of the people is stronger than the will of any party," replied Arabel, who that night felt for once that he was stronger than his rival and able to impose his will.

"I refuse," he said to Arabel, "to authorise the massacre you have in your mind. It is sheer murder you are after."

"That's all right. . . . Stop where you are then. Take no notice. Forget all your charming theories and nonsense. . . . To-morrow you will be grateful to us."

He prepared to leave. Valero hesitated for a moment and then asked him to wait a second.

"I will come with you."

He placed his pistol in his holster and left with Arabel. The magnificent car that had been commandeered for the use of the leader of the patrol stopped in front of the door of the old convent that had been converted into a prison. A few mysterious shadows could be seen in the vicinity and near the entrance there were groups of men waiting, obviously impatient, in a menacing attitude. Valero and Arabel alighted from the car and passed a number of men already at the entrance mixed up with the militiamen forming the guard.

"Massacre!" muttered a sinister voice behind the two leaders. They hurried into the prison. The militiaman commanding the guard came out of the guardroom to say that he had not enough men to oppose those outside, and that he could place no confidence in the temper of his own men.

"It can't be avoided! They would walk over our dead bodies."

Valero telephoned to the Government Authorities. Their answers were evasive and indefinite. He was asked to resist as well as he could, to wait, and at least to try to convince the mob; to be tactful with the guard, and not to use force against the people unless absolutely necessary. At the end telephone calls were not even answered and, meanwhile, many of the men outside had penetrated as far as the guardroom. When Valero tried to get them out it became evident that the task was not only an impossible but a dangerous one. More men came surging in. The militiamen guarding the door tried to stop them but they were easily overpowered and in the end were mixed up with the invaders. The hall was full of menacing men armed with pistols and rifles.

"Come on!" they were shouting. "Let us get at them."

They were attempting to force the door leading to the interior of the prison but Valero, pushing his way between them by making a superhuman effort, managed to get there first and, turning his back to the

door he faced the armed men. He shouted with all his might for silence and succeeded in making himself heard:

"Comrades," he said, "the revolution has its own laws to fulfil, its own justice to mete out. But let us stop at mob law. It isn't necessary. I only need twenty men to play the part of the arm of justice for the revolution. You yourselves can choose which of you it is to be. The rest must leave the prison."

"Justice!" shouted one.

"Justice shall be done, I promise."

"We all want it, and now!"

"Yes, yes, it shall be done now . . . advance twenty men to administer it!"

At first there were angry murmurings. It was clear they did not entirely trust him. Then a pale, emaciated youth with the symbolical hammer and sickle on his cap stepped forward.

"I will be one of them."

"And I."

"And I, too."

After the communists, the distrustful anarchists came forward, and when Valero had counted twenty he ordered, in a tone of command:

"Everyone else leave the prison! These comrades will not fail to tell you how the revolution administers its justice. Get out!"

Calling one of the leaders, he placed the twenty men under orders to round up all the military officers in

the prison and to take them to the big inner court of the convent. The leader had a long list in his hand and, after his men had brought the officers from the cells and tied their hands behind their backs, he ticked off each name with a red pencil. Valero stood next to him without saying a word or giving the slightest sign of emotion.

The number of officers in the prison was a hundred and twenty-five. They were all lined up in the court, Valero and Arabel followed. In the darkness of the night there could be seen only a dark blue square of starry sky above and, against one of the walls of the court, a blurred line of faces of men standing in soldierly formation.

"Don't you think we had better bring some lights?" asked one of the leaders.

"No, it is not necessary," answered Valero, who had his own reasons for preferring the scene to remain in shadow.

Here and there glowing cigarette ends indicated the presence of the militiamen.

Valero's voice was hard and unrelenting. It tore through the darkness like a lightning flash.

"Citizens, soldiers!" he shouted. Then, after a second of intense silence, he repeated: "Citizens, soldiers! The Republic has deprived you of the liberty you enjoyed and used against its interests. You are in prison as enemies of the people and of the régime. In normal circumstances the crimes of which you are

accused would have been judged by the civil magistrates in the ordinary way, but war is at the door of Madrid and the normal function of justice cannot be carried out. You are now to be submitted to the inexorable justice of war. You know what that means. But no matter what manner of crimes you have committed against the Republic and the people you can vindicate yourselves now and recover your liberty. The army of the people needs competent and courageous leaders to lead them to victory. You can now amend your past and thus avoid the final punishment. Those amongst you who desire to recover both your liberty and your rank in the army; who do not wish to be considered as traitors and judged now; all those ready to defend the revolution by fighting for it: Step forward!"

The wavering line of officers stirred faintly for a second but no one broke the formation. Valero cast his eyes along the motionless row of men. Was there not in the darkness a grey head that he could distinguish? There must be . . . he must come forward! There was still one more chance. He repeated impatiently what he had just said. This time no one moved at all. Finally:

"Citizens, officers! The Republic calls upon you for the third and last time. Those who desire to save their lives must step forward."

But the shadows stood erect and tense and seemed carved out of stone.

"There is still time," he shouted again and this time there was urgency and anguish in his voice. "One step forward or . . . death!"

Still the unbroken and heavy silence. Valero was horrified; he passed his hand simply over his forehead cold with sweat. Arabel approached him and muttered in his ear:

"That's enough. You have done all you could for these canaille. It is my turn now." Valero could not have spoken had he wished to.

The militiamen, at a signal from Arabel, began to manoeuvre round the officers. Here and there the light of a cigarette indicated their stealthy presence. The engines of the lorries started up, and kept on and on. . . . And until the day dawned all the dogs in the vicinity howled and barked furiously.

The official account of the air raid gave the number of casualties at two hundred and twenty-five. All were identified. But of the hundred and twenty-five bodies mown down in a prison court-yard, the authorities were unable to give any information.

LONG LIVE DEATH!

A CAPTAIN and two lieutenants were walking up and down the station platform, their spurs clinking and sabres rattling in their sheaths. In the background a platoon of soldiers stood at attention. The major commanding the soldiers was dictating telegrams to the post-office telegraphist operating the 'tic-tac' of a Morse machine. Outside in the utter obscurity of the night some shadows crossed the metals stealthily and, gathering in small groups, whispered to one another: What is happening?

At the station entrance a sergeant and some soldiers barred the way of a few would-be travellers who wished to board the Madrid train and sent them back to their homes muttering:

"No more trains running."

"But why?" they enquired.

"Superior orders," was the only answer.

At last someone important managed to get through to speak to the major.

"Can you explain to me what is happening?" he asked.

"The miners of Asturias have revolted and established a communistic régime in the region. The army, by order of the Government, has taken possession of

the railways in order to counter the revolution. The revolutionaries are trying to spread trouble through the rest of Spain and it is feared that a trainful of dynamiters will try to reach Valladolid."

A train finally arrived, but it contained no dynamiters, only some peaceful citizens frightened by the untoward circumstances. A group of officers went up to the driver's cab and one of them said dryly:

"Give the salute!"

The engine-driver, taken aback, looked at the officers, saw the deserted platforms and in the distance the company of soldiers and, without hesitating, lifted his sooty and grease-stained fist:

"Long live the Popular Front!"

Hardly had he spoken when he fell from the cab on to the platform, his head pierced by a bullet. He was left there, his face against the ground and a trickle of blood running from the wound. They covered him with some sacking.

The officers ordered everyone out of the train and they were told to line up on the platform.

In the country inn there were three servant girls—Rosario, Carmen and Adela. From morning till night they busied themselves in the bedrooms, the kitchen, the garden and the poultry-yard. The three of them and a man-servant, who looked like a rough goatherd and wore a grotesque smoking jacket to serve at table, were the only staff of the small hotel situated in the

heart of the Sierras. It was a kind of pension where a few people from the neighbouring towns took their holidays, or sometimes a well-to-do family from Madrid who thought it fun to ruralise.

The three servant girls and the waiter were "reds," that is to say they were members of their trade unions and their names appeared on the affiliated list in the near-by village of Miradores. The clientele of military, professional men, people of private means and bureaucrats, put up with this because the four of them worked themselves to death. Even the wife of Señor Tiron, a man of conservative political ideas and a well known barrister from Valladolid, had to admit it:

"In no other hotel in the Sierras can one get such good service for the prices charged!"

For these reasons, and also because the three servant girls did not refuse to attend Mass on Sundays, the patrons tolerated their "red" politics.

That Sunday night in July, Pascual the waiter was late serving at table and while he hustled about in his tight-fitting smoking jacket it was plain to see that he was perturbed and agitated. He had passed the afternoon in the political committee-room of the village and had warned the three girls:

"Do not go to bed to-night. Things are going to happen I can tell you."

The meeting had been very agitated. The wireless had given vague news of the rebellion of the army in Morocco, the political parties of Spain had called all

their members' attention, and orders and advice had been given. The guests of the hotel were elated by the news of the military rebellion and were celebrating in advance the triumph of their friends, of which they were quite positive.

"It was high time that the red rabble was taught a lesson," said Señora Tiron with an authoritative ring in her voice, casting a glance in the direction of the waiter, as if that rough peasant who was a member of a trade union was the epitome of Anarchy. Señor Tiron, an enthusiastic partisan of the fascists and strongly connected with the parties of the right in Valladolid, wanted to start for that town at once but he could find no one to drive him there, so he was forced to resign himself to delay his journey until the morning. He went to bed very worried. Spain needed him. He fell asleep thinking of the glorious future the military were about to bring about both for Spain and for himself.

While he and the rest of the guests slept, dreaming of brilliant parades, low wages, high rents and religious processions, Pascual and the three girls, Rosario, Carmen and Adela, left the hotel stealthily and went to the Committee-room of Miradores where the villagers belonging to the political parties of the left had congregated. About two o'clock in the morning a car with a socialist leader came along, calling on the Sierra villages and giving concrete orders. The commander of the Civil Guard telephoned to Madrid and was told

to remain at the disposal of the legal republican authorities of the village. He could not prevent the villagers arming themselves with any weapons they could find.

At seven o'clock that morning Pascual, carrying an old sporting gun and bearing a red armlet was, together with another man, guarding the road near the hotel. When Señor Tiron left the hotel to try to find someone to take him to Valladolid he saw, to his amazement, Pascual advance towards him and bar his way, saying with great pomposity:

"Halt, citizen! No one must leave the hotel!"

"Of all the impudence! On what authority are you here?" he thundered.

"I'm obeying the Committee's orders! Go back inside I say!"

Tiron just looked disdainful and walked on. At this the comrade accompanying Pascual took aim with his sporting gun and asked calmly:

"Shall I shoot him?"

"No, wait a moment," answered Pascual.

Full of blind rage and fear, Señor Tiron darted back into the hotel. Perhaps those brutes really intended to kill him. Was it possible?

The scene had been witnessed by some of the guests and there was a great commotion in the inn. They all gathered together in the dining-room and there was a terrific din of protestation and hysteria from the women. The children, frightened without knowing

why, were whining and crying. They tried to telephone to Madrid to ask for help but they could not get through. When they realised that the wires had been cut and that they were at the mercy of the "canaille," as they called the villagers, they tried to calm down and to compose themselves. Time was passing and news came through the radio that was not encouraging. The Montana barracks in Madrid had been stormed by the people and all the rebel officers there had been shot. Later in the day when they were fully convinced that the reds had, temporarily at least, the upper hand and feeling very hungry having had nothing to eat all day, they attempted friendly tactics. The three servant girls, Rosario, Carmen and Adela, who had been in the village the whole morning put in an appearance at last. They arrived gay and excited, their cheeks burning and eyes shining; they wore round their necks red silk handkerchiefs and republican badges pinned on their sleeves. Adela, the youngest of the three, wore, at a rakish angle, the forage-cap of a Civil Guard. They came into the dining-room with their left fists raised, shouting gleefully:

"Salud, Comrades!"

The guests surrounded them and eagerly asked for news, which was that the people were victorious. After routing the rebels in Madrid the workers had managed to gain access to the barracks, had formed columns of commandeered lorries, and were advancing on the

neighbouring villages and towns. That very night a column from Avila would be there in the village. The rebels were in possession of Avila and it was necessary to rout them there as well.

The ladies were very cast down by those tidings and, moreover, they were very hungry. Rosario, Carmen and Adela, despite their triumph, were prepared to serve the dinner . . . on condition, of course, that the ladies helped. Social revolution established that everyone had to work. . . . They hoped that that was clear!

The wife of a major in the artillery was ordered to peel potatoes, Señora Tiron told to light the kitchen fire, and Señor Tiron himself to lay the table, which task he accepted with a forced smile. Adela was telling him what to do and the girl was laughing heartily at his comic clumsiness. She found it most funny that such an important gentleman should be so amiable and obliging. After dinner, when the shadows of night had descended on the village, pessimism and indignation again took the upper hand. The three girls returned to the village and the guests began to think of a way to try and free themselves from that loathsome tyranny. Señor Tiron had a plan. If he could only leave the hotel he might make contact with people in the village belonging to his own political party, and they could possibly get in touch with others in the neighbouring villages. He had an idea that they might be prepared to face the situation and that it might be possible somehow to establish contact with the rebels.

He ventured as far as the patio at the back of the hotel without being seen by the militiamen.

Meanwhile, the column that had started from Madrid had stopped at Miradores. The lorries were full of labourers, amongst whom were some working girls, civil guards and militiamen, all demonstrating great excitement at having routed the military in the capital. They were singing the "International" with much flourishing of rifles and pistols and raising of clenched fists. On their way from Madrid to the Avila front their numbers had been increased by men from other villages. When the column of about twenty lorries reached Miradores it was reinforced by a lorry full of villagers, amongst whom was Pascual the waiter. The three girls asked to be allowed to join the fighters and, dressed in blue overalls, each with a pistol in her belt, and flushed with excitement, they proceeded light-heartedly to the adventure.

The village seemed deserted. Those that had not already left with the lorries shut themselves in, fearing a direful fate for their homes if not for themselves. During the night, mysterious shadows had moved about the village and the surrounding district.

Until late in the morning nothing had happened. Suddenly the boom of guns was clearly heard from the village and it was understood that a battle between the rebels and the militiamen advancing on Avila was undoubtedly taking place not more than twenty miles away.

The first indications were a car full of militiamen that drove through the village at full speed on its way to Madrid. It was shot at by men ambushed on the outskirts of Miradores. An hour after, a lorry full of wounded militiamen stopped in the village square, and cases that needed immediate attention were taken care of, although even when the wounded were being lifted out they were shot at by ambushed sharpshooters.

In the afternoon definite news began to arrive from the field of battle. The rebels had mown down the advancing militiamen from strongly entrenched impregnable positions in the Sierras, which had been carefully prepared by the military long before the rebellion in order to bring about a coup d'état that had been planned months ahead.

The inexpert militiamen had advanced along the main road firing from lorries and the accurate firing of the rebels had played havoc amongst them. The reds that escaped this terrible first encounter alighted from lorries and, under cover of the big boulders on both sides of the road, fought for a few hours but they were soon forced to retire and, jumping on the few remaining lorries that had not been put out of action, they drove back to the village. The number of the mysterious aggressors had meanwhile increased and the lorries were received in Miradores by a deadly onslaught from windows and roofs. The sympathisers with the rebels were a few rich residents and a great

number of the well-to-do visitors accustomed to pass the summer in the village and the surrounding district and who believed that the rebels would shortly arrive, following hard on the routed militiamen. They quickly organised a surprise attack, pressing the advantage given by the state of panic in the ranks of the militiamen. Those who had escaped unscathed from the battle dispersed, simply jumping from the lorries and leaving behind the wounded and dead. Rosario, Carmen and Adela had been among the lucky ones and, although terror-stricken, they did not desert Pascual who had been wounded in the chest by a bullet. The three brave girls dragged the waiter from the lorry and brought him into the hotel under the fire of the ambushed fascist sympathisers. When they placed him on a divan in the hall he was already dead.

The spasmodic shooting continued in the village and the country round it. Under cover of darkness and taking advantage of the confusion, a number of cars arrived at the hotel. They had been sent from Avila to carry as many sympathisers as possible and those who could not be conveyed were informed that the victorious troops could not be far behind. Rosario, Carmen and Adela had removed the body of Pascual to the kitchen and were huddled in a corner, horrified and deflated like empty gas-bags. The guests resented the presence of the "red" corpse in the hotel and bullied the girls, demanding them to remove it.

"You must take 'it' out of here! How dare you bring it into the hotel! Now the soldiers will arrive and will think that this place is full of marxists! Put the body outside!" they ordered in a fury.

But the troops did not arrive. After routing the republican militiamen they remained strongly entrenched in strategic positions. On the other hand there arrived from Madrid, two hours later, another column of fighters for the people's cause. The first lorries were shot at by the fascist sympathisers, but the number of the republican forces was overwhelming, and the village was surrounded and occupied by them. Madrid sent all available men to fight the rebels in the Sierras. Men of all ages, and even a good number of women, armed with rifles that they found in the stormed barracks of the city, were constantly arriving in lorries. The men who had attacked the republicans in Miradores were hunted like wild beasts and overpowered and killed without quarter. The village priest made a stronghold in the belfry and resisted capture for hours, killing many attackers, until at last, with his ammunition exhausted, some militiamen battered down the door and flung him from his lofty fortress. The flowing, black habit of the priest floated in the air against the milky whiteness of dawn like a monster bat ousted from its night shelter.

Señor Tiron had sent his wife to Avila in one of the cars that arrived in the night. He had been organising the attacks on the militiamen and he himself had used

to good account a hunting rifle of his own. When he realised that the game was up he tried to run away in the direction of Avila but soon he found that it was impossible, so he sought shelter in the village in fear of his life, for he knew that he could hope for no mercy. He entered the hotel by the back door and tip-toed into the kitchen where the three servant girls were disconsolately seated and begged them with a pleading voice:

"Don't give me away, help me to hide!"

They looked at him with hatred in their smouldering eyes.

"If you give me away they will kill me. . . . Please, please say that I have never left the hotel. I beg you. . . . I implore you. . . ."

He took the hands of one of them and tried to kiss her, beside himself with despair.

Rosario pushed him away and, pointing to Pascual's body and mad with rage, shouted:

"Look at that and learn your lesson!"

Señor Tiron kept his eyes riveted on the rigid form, and from that moment he realised that he was as good as dead.

Rosario went to the door and opened it violently.

"Where are you going?" Tiron called out to her.

"I am going to tell them where you are hiding. I am going to make you pay for what I know you have done. You murderer, you skunk and rat."

She ran towards the Committee rooms. When she

was quite near she heard a wild shout of terror and, almost at the same time, a volley of shots rang out. She stopped at the noise and saw a small man standing with his back to a wall, his arms raised, he made an imploring gesture and fell to the ground, pierced by a dozen bullets from the rifles of a militiamen patrol.

"One swine less! Let us ferret out more of them!" shouted the men exultantly.

Rosario saw them go marching on their errand of death and she drew near, horrified, to look closer at the corpse. He was a well-dressed man, thin and insignificant. He was holding something in his clenched hand. She stooped to look. A paper? She came nearer and saw it. It was a snapshot of a couple of children, a boy and a girl dressed in white, snatched hastily from his wallet. He had been looking at it lovingly for the last time, wishing perhaps to imprint on his mind the thought of something dear and lovely which might alleviate the sting of unprepared-for death. She did not realise that she had stood there for a long time, her woman's heart flooded by a wave of compassion.

She made a great effort, pulled herself together, and went back slowly and painfully to the hotel. She went into the kitchen. Señor Tiron was still there, a dejected figure seated in a corner with his head leaning on his hands and staring stupidly at Pascual's body. Rosario passed him without even a glance and knelt beside the corpse, going through his pockets. She extracted

a soiled leather pocket-book and handed it to Tiron.

"Take this," she said. "It is the identity book of Pascual, a member of the Socialist Party. In his locker you will find his working clothes. Now get out if you want to live!"

Señor Tiron, his eyes lit with the sudden excitement of a reprieved man, snatched the precious document and again tried to kiss the girl's hand, this time in gratitude. Rosario repulsed him.

"Go now! Go!"

The door banged. . . . Rosario hid her face in her hands and cried like a forlorn child suddenly bereaved of all that it knows and loves.

* * * * *

Valladolid had become one of the main fascist towns. It was a day of military solemnity. A morning of brilliant sunshine, the bells of all the churches sang their metallic anthems and the Plaza Mayor, a broad square, was full of people. An ample space was cleared and fascist militiamen lined the route of the expected procession. In the front row children waved flags bearing the red-and-yellow colours of the fallen monarchy, and ladies wearing black veils and mantillas grew excited at the slightest opportunity and cheered the saviours of Spain with thin voices that carried only a few yards. Behind them was a confused mass of men and women, and among them men who held their fists clenched inside their coat pockets.

A clamorous wave of sound swelled like a rising tide. First there marched past the "Pedritos" and the "Flechas," the juvenile fascist formations in uniforms that were imitations of the Rome and Berlin designs for similar organisations. They marched deeply impressed at their game of soldiers. The bands played the Italian "Giovinezza" and the German "Horst Wesel." There were shouts of "Viva España!" and "Long live the National Army." Then the well-drilled and smartly uniformed companies of fascists, the Phalange Española, marched past to the sound of high-pitched bugles. In the centre of the Plaza there was a platform ready for the General-in-Command and the Staff Officers. The Officers of the troops looked on at the marching Phalangists and smiled in a benevolent and patronising manner. They saw them as a few poor civilians enjoying the game of playing at soldiers when they were, in reality, nothing but poor clerks, traders and shop-people; men of a class that could not aspire to military rank.

The sharp notes of a bugle immobilised and silenced both public and soldiers. The Phalangists presented arms and the General (one of the rebel chiefs) arrived on horseback, accompanied by his aide-de-camp and escorted by a platoon of Moorish cavalry arrayed in magnificent green-and-white uniforms. Once the honours rendered, a speaker announced at the microphone that the General could not address the people as he would have liked as, unfortunately—the speaker

explained with much verbosity—the General was suffering from a sore throat. They had, however, the great fortune of having on the platform a great orator, and homage to their national heroes that "had been assassinated by the red canaille" would be delivered by Señor Tiron, a very important party member. He had pleasure to present, Señor Don Gaetano Tiron.

Señor Tiron, erect, advanced chest forward and waited with hand extended until the ovation of the multitude had died down. He was going to speak of the heroic Phalangists of Valladolid.

Señor Tiron's sonorous, baritone voice filled the Plaza with a tirade about the glorious death of the Phalangist leader in the region of the village of Sanbrian. Did they know how he had died, how he was assassinated rather? Did they know of the heroic deeds of the Phalangists in Sanbrian?

* * * * *

Sanbrian was a small village in old Castille, in the middle of rich country that belonged to a few landlords. While Señor Tiron moved his audience to patriotic tears, the only inhabitant left alive in Sanbrian was a middle-aged woman who was squatting in the porch of her house in the deserted street. Indifferent to her surroundings, her eyes were fixed staring into space while she recalled to mind, once more, the terrible things that had just happened in Sanbrian. If she could have stood on the platform in place of the pom-

pous Señor Tiron, provincial leader of Phalangist Spain, this is what she would have said in her simple way:

"To our village there came the news that there was a revolution in Valladolid. The landlords had done away with the Republic that had taken the land from them and given it to us. They were masters again. We heard that the young gentry were going to the villages killing the peasants, so the men of our village decided to resist them. To their revolution we would oppose our revolution. After all, we poor people were in the majority and if it came to a fight we should be able to beat them. But some of the villagers did not dare to revolt. The gentry could not kill everybody they said. Better to do nothing. . . . But the men belonging to the peasants' union said that, resistance or no resistance, they would come and kill us all and that our only chance was to fight like devils. The villagers took the law in their own hands. The priest and half a dozen civil guards were made prisoners. Some wanted to shoot them, but in the end it was decided to expel them from the village. The three or four well-to-do families, the only ones left, went away of their own accord. The men of the union started to give orders. . . . There must always be someone to give orders. . . . None of the rich villagers were shot, but the men of the union took possession of their houses and began to give everything away to the poor. That was not right, and many wretched villagers without a thing in the world did not dare to take what was given

them. Then, after a few days of all this, the gentry came as we feared. They were the young sons of the landlords and arrived in half a dozen cars. They were armed with rifles and pistols and entered the village shooting in all directions. So the men of the village fought them like devils and in the square there was a terrific fight. . . . Not a single young master was left alive, and that is how the leader of the Phalangists died in Sanbrian. . . . They came to kill and found death waiting for them.

"The men of the union were very proud of their killing, but we sensed that we would have to pay dearly for it. After a week, we heard that troops were coming from Valladolid . . . terrible troops . . . mad dogs . . . and worse than that! Again our men tried to resist and defend us. It was horrible. The troops carried fire-spitting machines. It was like mowing corn. The few men who were not killed escaped to join the fighters in other places. Only a handful of people remained in Sanbrian. We shut ourselves up in our houses and displayed white rags in the windows, but even that was of no avail. It would have been much better to have fought to our last breath. The troops and Legionaries, Moors and renegades, burst open our doors with the butts of their rifles and killed all the men in front of their womenfolk and children. They did not discriminate; they killed them all. After the Moors and Legionaries there came the sons of the landlords, and as they found no more men to kill, they

killed the women. What I saw with my own eyes was never seen in this world, nor will it be seen again. Wild beasts let loose could not have been so cruel!

"That night, amidst the volleys of the executioners and the muffled cries of the victims, a few women managed to escape death and run to the mountains, carrying their children in their arms or dragging them by the hand. The sentries fired in the darkness at the hurrying shadows that fluttered past so that some of the women fell pierced by bullets and at day-break children were found crying, not daring to let go of the clenched hand that had become colder and colder all night, still gripping tightly with their small, pitiful fingers.

"I was the only inhabitant left in Sanbrian. The troops went and now I am the only living soul in the village. They killed my man before my very eyes, my children ran away. I wanted to die, but I did not run away. I waited and longed for death. I do not know why they did not kill me.

"Yes, the only living creature in Sanbrian. During the night some of the women come trembling and trying to hide, not knowing that there is no one left to see them. They come to find out what has happened to their children and their husbands, but after wandering along the deserted streets they realise that there is no one left and they run away again with greater terror and horror in their lost souls. I am the only one left in Sanbrian to cry for all, to pray for all. . . ."

* * * * *

A clamorous ovation acclaimed the last words of the most excellent Señor Don Gaetano Tiron, entrusted with the honour of paying homage to the memory of the leader of the *Phalange Española* ignobly assassinated in Sanbrian, and privileged to sing of the glories of the Spanish Army freeing the country of the tyranny of the reds.

There followed congratulations, handshakes, cheers and much military saluting and clicking of heels. Military bands played to a brilliant march past. The *Phalangists* went about Valladolid and formed groups, shouting their war cry:

"Long live death!" "Long live death!"

After the ceremony in the square, the leaders of the *Phalange Española* gathered together in the cafés and beer saloons. The smartest café was honoured by the presence of the Commanding *Phalangist* Officers and Señor Tiron was the hero of the hour.

"That is what I call a speech," said Paco Cebrian, a typical young blood from Madrid; a practical joker and with a tongue that boasted wittily of having fought the reds in the Sierras near Madrid like a wild boar.

Paco Cebrian was a curious type, representative of a caste who were proud to be thought more brutal than they actually were. He had joined the fascists because as he said: "They fight like wild beasts." He was a natural product of the national inferiority complex, engendered from so many reversals in far-off times. He

hated everything that was not genuinely Spanish and, when he was in his cups, shouted incongruously:

"Long live a Spanish omelette, and down with the British Foreign Office! Down with bathrooms! Long live dirt! I like fat women, to hell with dieting!"

"This Paco Cebrian is a coarse brute. But such a good patriot!" commented some intellectual journalists, authors and professors who had run away from Madrid and served fascism by gathering round the leaders of the Phalange, not without a certain servile fear in their thoughts and speech.

There was also present a commander of a Phalange company who had been for many years a waiter in a café and was known as "El Cabezota," the big-headed one. He was a character in Valladolid, where he had always resisted the Trade Unions. El Cabezota said to Señor Tiron with subtle sarcasm:

"Yes, exactly . . . what happened in Sanbrian was exactly as you have described. . . . I was there. And if it were not as you said, well, let any man or woman from Sanbrian come forward and deny it. You need not fear that, Señor Tiron, eh! We saw to it that there was no one left to contradict you, didn't we?"

Señor Tiron, who knew the exact facts of what had taken place in Sanbrian, as well as the truth about it, answered rhetorically as though he were still on the platform:

"Facts in themselves mean nothing. History is only interested in the meaning of facts. History is never

written by those who make it . . . but by men like us, its commentators."

"Are *you* telling me, me who was there, what happened in Sanbrian? You who remained comfortably in Valladolid!?" abruptly interrupted Paco Cebrian.

"Well, Paco, you must admit that these things happened. Who should know better than I who tell them as I saw them. . . . Yes, I know you were there too, but you see, you could not realise what really happened, you lacked, well . . . what should I say? . . . You lacked historic perspective."

Paco felt the impulse to say something very rude to Señor Tiron, but thought better of it and remained silent.

* * * * *

That very afternoon there arrived in Valladolid all that was left of a battalion of Legionaries, who had been fighting for several weeks in the attack on Madrid. They came to rest and to replenish their depleted contingent. The Legionaries marched along the streets staging one of their showy parades, with much swinging of arms and great arrogance, as if demanding ovations. They marched with collars unbuttoned and shirt-sleeves rolled up. Over their breasts some had pinned holy relics with the image of the Heart of Jesus and the motto "Bullet stop, I am protected!" The pious ladies from rebel territory had a big supply of these



relics and were very generous with them. One of the Legionaries, more spectacular than the rest, had torn his shirt at the breast and had stuck the medal on his bare skin.

The peaceful and cowardly townsfolk watched the march past, entranced by those famous warriors of the Foreign Legion whose legendary ferocity created a strange sensation which was a mixture of fear and security. In order to accentuate this terrific impression the legionaries had, among other puerile manifestations, replaced the staff of battalion colours with human bones tied together and that sinister touch made the flesh creep of the shopkeepers, clerks, girls and children. The children, especially, followed with wondering eyes the impressive standard-bearer and they wished they could see at closer quarters and touch those human bones. There arose in their youthful and fertile imaginations who knows what sort of unholy excitements.

Once the parade over, the legionaries walked and swaggered about the streets and crowded the cafés and wineshops of the old Castilian town, boasting of their heroic exploits. A group of Foreign Legion and fascist officers had gathered in one of the main cafés and were talking of the latest triumphs of the National Army. Apparently the advance in the Sierras had been important. The day before, the Legionaries had at last managed to take by storm Miradores, one of the little villages of the mountains that had offered the strongest resistance.

On hearing the name of the captured village, Señor Tiron, who was one of the party, dropped his head and felt ill at ease. His liverish complexion darkened and he felt a nasty taste in his mouth. The officer who was speaking kept on mentioning persons and places that rose vividly pathetic in front of Señor Tiron who tried in vain to oust them by closing his eyes. As the officer continued his fluid narration, Señor Tiron, his heart full of apprehension, waited to hear at any moment something unbearable. Three names kept hammering at his conscience. The shadows of three women rose accusingly. The officer went on with his story. The storming of Miradores had been one of the most difficult episodes of the war so far. The resistance of the villagers had been so determined and heroic. But the names of the three shadows tormenting his conscience were not mentioned by the officer.

Señor Tiron did not dare to ask questions. He preferred incertitude to certainty. But one thing he knew; the villagers of Miradores who had not perished in the fighting had been captured and brought to Valladolid. Probably they would be shot that very morning at dawn.

He left the café without daring to ask about the fate of the three girls who had saved his life and who had very likely been killed fighting against the cause he had defended. Perhaps they had been able to escape—his conscience was trying to find shelter in some kind of excuse—after all, what could he have done for them anyhow?

Possibly the three girls had been taken prisoners and sent to Valladolid! That might be very awkward! and he made an effort to dismiss the idea. He went back to his lodging, after making up his mind to dismiss the situation and not try to find out what had happened. It was much better so. . . . But, as he was about to ring the bell, the temptation to give his mind satisfaction and to set it at rest overcame him, and he started to walk in the direction of the central prison where he knew the fascist leaders were meeting to decide the fate of the prisoners.

"The legionaries made a good catch in Miradores, by Jupiter!" he was told the moment he entered the place. "Eleven of those devils who had barred the way of our men for two months in that part of the Sierras will die at dawn."

"Have you a list of the names?" he asked, trying to make his tone quiet and indifferent.

They gave him the paper to read. Hardly had he glanced at it when the three feared names sprung at him: Rosario, Carmen, Adela. He managed to control himself, but he could not take his eyes from the list and read the names again and again. He had a lucid sensation of the passing of time yet, within himself, he felt a desire for action. The insensibility of the people round him, who continued calmly talking and smoking, irritated and unnerved him. The list he was staring at could reveal nothing more. What was he doing with it in his hand? Yet something must be done. For a

moment a spark of generous impulse took shape in his breast and began to force him to a noble decision, but it was blighted by his fear, he was too mean a man to respond to selfless generosity. He was about to say something—what, he did not exactly know—something courageous and redeeming. But the words froze on his lips, his blood turned to water in his veins, and the embryo of a splendid impulse vanished. Instead of making a heroic effort to save three women from death by the firing squad, three women to whom he owed his own life, he asked timidly:

"And what about these three girls?"

"The worst of the lot. Death is far too light a punishment for them," he was told.

"But are you sure? . . . I can hardly believe it," he dared to say.

"You have no idea. They have done terrible things. They killed the prisoners and blinded viciously the children of the well-to-do, putting out their eyes."

Señor Tiron could not help protesting—"That is not true. . . . I know better . . . I. . . ."

One of the leaders looked at him sternly and, approaching him, thrust his face, livid with rage, towards him.

"You know nothing, do you understand? Or have you forgotten that you belong to the Phalange Española? These women have perpetrated terrible crimes and they will pay for them with their lives. Orders from headquarters! Have you any objection?"

Señor Tiron stood at attention, arm outstretched.

"No, nothing, I am at your command, sir."

"You can go now!"

He walked away stiffly. Indeed he felt like an automaton. He was overwhelmed. The streets were already dark and deserted and, passing in front of a wine-shop, he heard the noise of people inside and could see a number of legionaries the worse for drink. Near his house he crossed a patrol of phalangists singing their marching hymn.

"Long live death!" they shouted.

That absurd slogan roared fearfully along the deserted streets of the town.

He entered his house, his teeth rattling with nervous ague, and shut himself in his bedroom. When he started to undress he unbuckled his leather belt and took his pistol from the holster. He looked at the weapon for a moment and then placed the nozzle of the gun against his temple. He closed his eyes and counted . . . one, two, three, four. . . .

Then he opened his eyes again and smiled at himself. What a comedian he was!

He threw down the pistol on to the top of the night table and a few minutes later fell into a heavy and profound sleep, just as though he were a holy saint.

The night wore on.

Suddenly he awoke in terror and tossed from one side of the bed to the other like a wild beast caught in a trap. He sat up and switched on the light.

"What a fool I am!" he thought, "my nerves are playing tricks with me. . . . I will have to take a tonic!"

He lay down again and shut his eyes and made a determined effort to sleep, but some inner anguishing urge made it impossible.

Finally he jumped out of bed in despair and began to dress. Then he opened the door silently and went out into the street. His footsteps led him involuntarily to the prison. Once in front of the door he paused for a second to think. What was he doing there? He walked round the building, keeping close to its sinister walls, and again found himself in front of the entrance. What was the time? he wondered irrelevantly. Then he saw a couple of lorries stop at the prison door. From them sprang out a number of phalangists. Señor Tiron felt as though he were paralysed. . . . Adela . . . Maria . . . Rosario. . . . The Phalangists had finished their killing already.

The men recognised him and expressed astonishment to find him there so early in the day. He answered evasively, trying not to stutter, hoping they would not hear the heavy beat of his heart. He did not have to ask questions, one of the phalangists began to tell him all about the shooting of the prisoners. This time it had been particularly unpleasant for among the condemned people there were three young girls—three red militiawomen.

"It is one thing to shoot a man, and another to

shoot women, I assure you," said one of the men, nodding his head at the horrid recollection.

"They are all bandits, red bandits, men and women! We must finish them off, all of them."

"And"—ventured Señor Tiron, unable to repress his morbid curiosity, yet trying to appear indifferent—"how did the girls die?" His cowardly conscience needed some evidence, to hear that at least the three victims had not suffered too much.

"Well, naturally, they did not want to die . . . they were young and pretty. . . . One of the youngest of the three. . . ."

"Adela?"

"Yes, I think her name was Adela. Did you know her?"

"Yes."

"Well, Adela, although she was a very frail creature, showed great strength. She tried to smile. . . . But suddenly she collapsed and we had to carry her to the wall as if she were a rag doll. When the rifles were pointed at her she stiffened and, by Jove! if she did not lift her clenched fist at us in defiance. But we gave her no time to say anything. One of them gave us very little trouble . . . she seemed to be stunned. But the one that impressed me most was the best-looking of them all, the eldest, I should think, a very handsome girl with dark skin. I think her name was Rosario. Yes, it was Rosario. She was supremely calm, not a shout, not a cry. She did not lift her fist, she did nothing.

She walked to the wall quietly and serenely. . . . But she cried and sobbed continuously." And the phalangist, obsessed by the scene, kept on saying: "How that girl cried. She cried like a little girl . . . like a baby."

Tiron stood there seemingly impassive and indifferent while the man kept repeating . . . "like a child crying it was . . ." but some part of him was not there at all. Some integral thing had left him altogether, never to return. . . .

ANVIL

THEY called him "Anvil." He was a jovial ogre of the Madrid suburbs who swaggered about, swinging his bulky corporation clad in blue jeans that had lost their colour from repeated washings. He lived near some vacant plots on the outskirts of the town. Anvil was a shaggy ogre but instead of devouring children he begot them with indecent prodigality. He camped more than lived, in the accepted sense of the word, in a miserable, broken-down house from which he emerged every morning as though from a forest, to enter the city's maze of cupolas, towers and chimneys, carrying in one hand a big forging hammer as giants must have carried axes.

As the towns gradually emerged from the forests in the course of time, so Anvil had changed from ogre into a proletarian iron-worker, but neither the forest nor the man Anvil had quite lost their primitive state. He was a blacksmith, son and grandson of blacksmiths. When a boy he had been trained in a forge that must have borne a great resemblance to the one where the mythological Vulcan worked and, although the mechanical progress of modern times had taught him to curb his instinct and to bring his brute force into line with the subtleties of technical training, he still

preserved the unrestrained characteristics of the primitive forger, of a man untamed by civilisation, strong and powerful, like those who for the first time, experimented with iron, fire, water and air, bettered the result, tempered it, and thus produced steel. Anvil was a good mechanic who, having seen the first motor-car imported into Spain, the first machine-gun, the first linotype machine and the first aeroplane, had added to his primitive qualities a good knowledge of modern technique. He belonged to that last generation of workers who still preserve a human quality in their way of living and working. The younger generation, those who have only known the machines since the invention of ball-bearing gear, do not feel that primitive instinct, that good common sense of man in his natural state, that made it possible at times for Anvil to enlighten with his own, instinctive intuition, the confusion of those who have learnt their trade from books.

The great city had not been able to conquer him and he had maintained and developed his strong personality. Every afternoon, when work was over, he escaped from the urban monster and went into the suburbs and across semi-urban open spaces to his home. His wife, Antonia, waited for him. He had had two others, but he had unwittingly caused the death of both, for they were unable to withstand the strain of continuous pregnancies. His sons and daughters were born at the rate of one a year for twenty-two

years. Nature, prolific but pitiless, saw to it that most of them died almost as soon as they were born and, for that reason, there survived only twelve or fourteen legitimate children with a sprinkling of illegitimate progeny begotten carelessly here and there.

In the house which he had built amongst the refuse heaps and building plots, over which grass and weeds crept unchecked, Anvil felt strong as a chieftain and free as a bushman. With the help of his children on whom he bestowed, impartially, blows and hunks of bread and cheese, he passed his evenings and the whole of Sundays working with great enthusiasm on a mechanical invention of his own, out of which he would never make a single penny. Nevertheless, it gave him the grand thrill of creative purpose. To obtain the materials necessary for his fantastic machinery he frequented the Madrid open-air market, *El Rastro*, where, for a few centimos, he was able to buy old spare parts of iron and steel which he adapted with great ingenuity. These inventions of his always turned out to be something that had been invented before or proved to be of no practical use at all.

Yet Anvil, in his own way, was a real artist who worked hour after hour for the pleasure of creation. But he had other activities, not so harmless, for in his workshop he manufactured weapons for agitators and militants, to be used in the violent struggle of labour versus capital, already raging secretly for decades in the Spanish heart. The infernal machines

of the worst terrorists as well as the fearful, sharp-pointed clasp-knives and even the pistols used by university students to fight Primo de Rivera's dictatorship, had been made in that picturesque and primitive workshop on the outskirts of Madrid.

Social revolution however, had progressed in the way of arms, and Anvil's "customers," from whom he never took a single penny, were using modern automatic pistols and guns far beyond his means of production. Anvil's workshop was no more the meeting place of the militants, and he himself had remained aloof from revolutionary activities because he hated to see the younger generation of workers organising themselves like soldiers, and to see them march past obeying commands and submitting to discipline. He, the anarchist and individualist, had cut off all connections with the new order of things and concentrated his energies on his strange and useless inventions, shut up in his house after working hours were over.

One Sunday afternoon, however, some of his old friends hurried to his workshop to tell him that the military had revolted and that the barracks were going to be stormed by the people. Anvil seized his old forging hammer with his powerful right hand, and, placing it at his side with the handle stuck inside the belt of his trousers, joined his comrades; marching with them back to the town, swaying his big belly and laughing jovially.

All night Anvil and his friends prowled in the

neighbourhood of the Montana barracks that rose, in the darkness, an imposing and menacing pile. Vainly they sought for a vulnerable spot. They knew that the military inside and the young fascists who had joined them were ready to resist to the last gasp. Hundreds of socialists and communists, armed with pistols and led by a shock-police lieutenant, had surrounded the enormous building. The barracks were well protected by ramparts and bastions, defended by machine-gunners and the only way of attacking was to storm it in the open, as in medieval times. The Government did not possess modern means to take the place. They brought a gun, but there were no gunners to handle it. At last they found a republican major who said he knew how to work the gun. He could not do so, however, and Anvil, who understood guns, helped him, until at last they managed to get it to fire. The shells flattened against the thick walls as if they were harmless pellets. They had to get a bigger gun. To gain time, a Government republican plane, the only one they possessed, flew over the barracks dropping leaflets threatening those within to surrender at once.

The Government had an endless number of men to compensate for the lack of war material. With the dawn the hundred round the barracks increased to thousands. The place was properly besieged by a mass of men, so thick and menacing that the rebels inside did not dare to attempt a sortie. At midday those on the Government's side had managed to bring up a

couple of big guns and had started to shoot with some good results, whilst the aeroplane dropped a few bombs on the roof of the barracks. The besiegers advanced in mass formation. There was no retreat, for those bringing up the rear made that impossible and kept pressing forward. The rebels' machine-guns fired on the crowd which writhed and twisted as though it were the body of some antediluvian monster smarting from many wounds. A well-aimed shot blew one of the doors of the barracks to pieces and the more determined besiegers tried to storm the place by that gap. A group of socialist and communist militiamen and some workers who had no arms stormed the ramparts. The rebels mowed down all of them, with few exceptions. Anvil found himself at the top of the incline and behind the low wall that surmounted the rampart. He took cover there with half a dozen militiamen, a sergeant of the regular army carrying the tricolour badge pinned on his tunic, a young student who wore an astonished expression on his face, a shock-policeman, well-armed with an automatic pistol, and a woman of the working-class who had a white pinafore over her dress. The door that had been blown to pieces by the gun shot was no more than a dozen feet away from them.

"Come on!" shouted the sergeant—"another push and we will do it!"

But the rebels' bullets rained on the group and fell to earth raising little spurts of soil like puffs of steam

from a boiling kettle. To reach the door it was necessary to go through that terrific barrage.

"Forward!" shouted a militiaman. "Let's see, how many of us have arms?"

The student made a gesture of despair, thrust his hands in his pockets and shrugged his shoulders. The shock-policeman cocked his pistol. The sergeant did the same with his revolver, and Anvil whirled his big hammer over his head. The woman fidgeted with the corner of her pinafore and started nibbling at it nervously.

"What are you doing here, my good woman?" asked the sergeant.

"My soldier son is inside there. I must save him. My son, you understand . . . my son."

The sergeant did not know what to say to that and, for lack of words, shrugged his shoulders.

At that moment the besieged began to shoot from another angle and bullets were falling at closer range.

"If we remain here we are all going to be killed," raged the storm-policeman. "Come on! Forward! Let us rush the barracks!"

"To the barracks! To the barracks!" they all shouted, trying to give each other courage by concerted speech and action. But no one dared to move.

Anvil threw out his enormous chest and, raising the hammer as if to strike the buildings, shouted

hoarsely "Now then you hell-hounds, you sons of bitches!"

He advanced, striding like a giant bear under the deluge of lead. The others followed under his spell. Hardly were they out of cover, when the storm-policeman fell, his chest pierced by a bullet. No one stopped, not even to glance back. Anvil reached the entrance unscathed, followed by the sergeant and the student shouting and raving and by the woman who advanced groping about blindly, for she had covered her eyes with her arm. They reached the entrance to find it blocked by debris and huge broken beams. Anvil, whirling his hammer, forced a passage with mighty blows. A savage joy illuminated his apoplectic, ogreish face. He advanced along the hall and reached the inner court of the barracks. To the astonished eyes of the defenders he must have looked like some mythological god of battle. The corpulent man, dressed in blue overalls, who, untouched by the showers of bullets, was brandishing a heavy forging hammer, must have seemed to them some superhuman creature. Anvil lifted the hammer above his head and shouted with a voice of thunder:

"Long live the social revolution!"

His voice rumbled and reverberated in echoes along the huge building and penetrated to the vast dormitories where the soldiers who had tried to side with the people were huddled together like sheep, covered by the rifles of the waiting guard.

The student advanced along the court behind Anvil and the sergeant was on the alert watching the movements of the officers and fascists on the first- and second-floor galleries above.

"Look out!" he shouted. "They are going to fire a mortar." He knew the place well and, catching hold of the woman's hand, he dragged her towards a little door near the stairs. Anvil and the student took no notice and went towards the centre of the court. A rain of bullets met them. Anvil jumped back quickly and took cover behind a pillar. The student fell, severely wounded.

"Mother, oh! Mother!" he cried, twisting and turning with pain and unable to rise from the ground, whilst the officers and fascists continued firing at him. Anvil sprung up from behind the pillar, grasped one of his legs and dragged him to cover, leaving him in a recess under the stairs leading to the galleries.

"I will come back for you. . . . Don't be a fool . . . don't go and die before I return. Pull yourself together, lad!"

On returning, he found the stairs full of disarmed soldiers who had somehow escaped from their guards. They advanced cautiously, not yet able to realise what was really happening. Another group of attackers had managed to storm the barracks and soon the court was invaded by the mob who mixed with the barrack soldiers as comrades for the same cause. The woman who had entered with the first group led by

Anvil had seen her son amongst the soldiers and was kissing and embracing him, shouting out cheers for the Republic in a frenzy of excitement.

"I have saved him, I have saved him," she kept on repeating.

The Montana barracks, an almost impregnable stronghold, had been taken. Its stout walls had proved useless against the determination of the people. The soldiers led the stormers to one of the galleries where they found an enormous amount of rifles, with fixed bayonets.

The officers and the fascists had tried to make a sortie with the soldiers at the point of the bayonet, but they desisted in view of the strength of the attackers. They had no confidence in the soldiers and had forced them to throw the rifles in a heap, which now came in handy for the mob to arm themselves. The majority had never handled a firearm before, and there were many aimless shots fired unintentionally which produced great confusion and some casualties.

The people, invading the place like a surging tide, had overwhelmed the rebels. Many officers committed suicide, others tried to escape in disguise by dressing themselves in the blue overalls used by soldiers for routine work in the barracks, but they were easily recognised and shot. General Fanjul the commanding officer was found hiding in a loft, dressed in this way. When he was dragged across the court, the woman who had entered the barracks with Anvil and the others,

on being told that he was the leader of the rebels, went straight up to him, shouting:

"Murderer! It was you who wanted to kill my son! Criminal fiend!"

It was difficult to prevent her scratching his eyes out.

Anvil went about the barracks breaking open doors with mighty blows of his hammer, followed by a group of workers who took possession of all the arms they could find. One of them had spotted a fencing kit and had put the mask on and marched towards the court brandishing a foil. Another one had donned the plumed helmet of a sixteenth-century warrior's armour and having shut the visor could neither remove the helmet nor open the visor. As he had nothing on but trousers, that helmet gave him the appearance of an absurd masquerader. That queer mass of incongruously armed men found in one of the rooms a number of officers who, at their entrance, raised their hands in surrender. At the point of their bayonets they pushed them towards a big gymnasium and ordered them to go forward and, as they obeyed, shot them down with a volley, finishing them off one after the other. Anvil, who did not expect the men to shoot, shouted in anger:

"Why have you killed them? Who gave the order to shoot?"

"I did," answered a communist militiaman who was one of those that had stormed the barracks with him. Anvil looked him up and down. He was young, clean-

shaven and well-dressed and his hands and finger-nails were well-kept.

"I gave the order to shoot. What of it?"

Anvil lifted his shoulders and said:

"Psh. . . . That was not at all necessary."

That was all he said. He turned his back on the communist and left the group. The young communist and the others continued searching the rooms looking for more rebel officers to shoot.

More and more people surged into the barracks to arm themselves and there were shouts of "Forward! Let's go to Toledo! To Guadalajara! Death to fascism. Forward! Forward!"

Columns of lorries full of armed militiamen began to leave the Montana barracks for the barracks in other parts of the town. On top of one of the lorries Anvil saw the woman and her son. She was wearing his cartridge belt and had a rifle which she whirled above her head shouting: "Death to the traitors! Death to the murderers!"

At nightfall the people took possession of Madrid and of all the barracks. The victorious mob marched through the principal squares and streets brandishing in triumph the rifles they had taken from the military, and dragging with them the military band of the barracks, whose leader was trying his best to get his men to play the "Internationale." It seemed as though the brass instruments made for soldiers refused to produce the notes of the proletarian hymn.

The people had won the day.

Anvil replaced the handle of his hammer inside the belt of his trousers and, his belly swaying, went his way towards his home where his wife and dozen children were waiting for him. He had seized some brand-new shiny bullets and the gold chain of an officer's watch as a present for the children.

* * * * *

A few days later his comrades sought him out. They needed him. The triumph of the Madrid mob was the beginning of the civil war in the whole of Spain. The rebels had brought colonial troops from Morocco and were making considerable progress in Andalusia. The proletariat had to organise themselves speedily to have any chance against the professional soldiers. Men there were in plenty, but they needed specialists trained to know their job, capable of handling war material such as that seized in the barracks. Anvil enlisted willingly in the ranks of the militiamen. Although he was half a century old he was strong as a bull and had the spirit and courage of a young man. In his twenties he had been a real Hercules. There was an episode of his life testifying to that. There had arrived in Madrid a famous ju-jitsu wrestler named Raku who, at every performance, challenged anyone in the audience to come forward to match his strength against the skill of the challenger. Anvil jumped on to the stage fired with a passionate urge to fight the Japanese. Raku sprang

at the giant's neck like a cat and managed to immobilise him with one of his tricky holds. Anvil was beaten, and tried vainly to free himself from the lethal grip of the Jap without making the signal necessary to indicate that he had had enough. He felt his breath leaving his lungs. The spectators, terrified, saw his face become congested, turning from scarlet to purple and then going black.

"Give in! Give in!" they shouted and Anvil, his eyes protruding out of their sockets, made tremendous efforts to get rid of that strangling pressure round his neck, but his strength was at an end.

"Give in! Give in!" they shouted, frightened and angry, for the moment had come when a sensation of unavoidable tragedy was felt by all. Anvil looked as if he would pass out at any moment, but the Japanese, who knew very well just how far he could go and that there was still a margin of safety left, kept up the pressure on his victim relentlessly. He was waiting for that moment when death creeps close and the instinct of self-preservation calls for mercy. But not even when that moment arrived did Anvil yield. The Japanese disconcerted, for he felt that he was going too far and that the man might die under his strangle-hold, had to let go and was furious because the man had not been forced, like all the others, to acknowledge his superiority and was ready to die rather than do so. Anvil fell, unconscious, flat on the ground like a sack and seemed within an inch of death. The Japanese,

in great alarm, hastened to his aid and slowly life and consciousness drifted back to him. Fighting for breath, he at last managed to struggle to his knees and, when he felt his strength returning, he inhaled deeply and again threw himself at the Jap and with a terrifying roar like a wild animal, caught hold of him by the leg, whirled him round his head as though he were nothing more than a dead cat, and threw him into the auditorium. The Jap fell, helplessly, yards away and broke several ribs.

Twenty years had gone by since that day. Anvil, fat and big-bellied, was no more the Hercules of those days. He was still a robust ogre, rather terrifying although grotesque, for he had the unexpected agility of a cumbersome elephant. Twenty years ago he had attracted women on account of his magnificent virility, but now they mocked him when he looked at them with desire shining in his small alert eyes where it smouldered like sensuous fire. Yet in spite of the fun they made of him, they still succumbed to his onslaughts and if he could not command true love, at least he still managed to get what he wanted, and if his willing victims were not careful they found themselves pregnant.

So in spite of his fifty years, Anvil plunged into the civil war with great impetuosity. He was sent to serve with the tank unit taken from the army depots; antiquated machines practically out of commission, which hardly went a score of miles without a breakdown. With the help of some mechanics he repaired

them carefully. But such was the condition in which he found them that even his great mechanical experience could achieve no more than to give them the appearance of being useful and, like Don Quixote, who made a helmet with cardboard and paste and wire, he did not dare to put it to a second test, having smashed it with the first. So Anvil passed the tanks, letting them appear to be in good order without testing them too severely. The tanks manned by some foolhardy and courageous proletarians left Madrid at last, with the purpose of stopping the advance of the rebels from the south-west. They crossed La Mancha, Don Quixote's country, with the same slow progress as Rocinante, the hero's horse. The merciless sun of the Castilian steppes heated the steel plates, behind which the brave knight-errants of the proletariat roasted themselves. Anvil, naked from the waist up, his skin shining with sweat and eyes flaming, was in one of the tanks. As they crossed the villages and fields the peasants lifted their clenched fists and the women made the sign of the cross to exorcise the evil one. On their way, they passed wretched caravans of refugees who greeted them gladly, for they believed, in their ignorance, that the tanks were symbols of their security and that with such champions on their side they would soon be able to return to their homes.

They had to stop frequently owing to many break-downs. Anvil jumped out and with his big

hammer in one hand and a tool-case in the other, ran about doing the necessary repairs, until he managed to get the sulky machine on the move again. In this precarious manner they got as far as Extremadura, where the militiamen units that had started from Madrid were constantly retreating before the Moors and Legionaries supported by Italian aeroplanes. The masses of workers and peasants without proper leaders, badly armed, and knowing no discipline, were being killed from the air before meeting the enemy. Each time the Government forces managed to establish a line of resistance, the Italian and German aeroplanes started a terrible and systematic bombardment of the town in the rear that served as base. The civilian population ran away in panic, and the militiamen were thus deprived of means of provisioning and as the troops had no army service organisation or mobile canteens they lacked food, shelter and, at times, even water. After a couple of days' crawling about the burning soil of the Extremadura plains under constant bombardment from the air, they were finally forced to retreat in disorder. It was thought that the tanks, which at that time were the only ones the republicans possessed, would save the situation. Once arrived at the firing-line they started at dawn from the principal square of the last village in republican territory and advanced into the enemy lines. Their noisy engines made the earth tremble under their weight. The rebel advance posts retreated and the tanks reached a small

town that had been evacuated the day before by the bulk of the enemy forces. Anvil rode in the first tank, his nude torso half out of the turret. He had slung the tool-box over his shoulder and carried his hammer in his right hand. At the slightest alarm or suggestion of a breakdown he jumped out and ran to the disabled tank, giving advice to the driver and, if necessary, going inside the tank himself to adjust the mechanism.

The tanks waited behind the houses of the village for the militiamen to advance, but when they sprang out of their trenches and began to spread over the treeless country-side a number of chasers appeared on the horizon and started to machine-gun them, cutting them down relentlessly. The aeroplanes attacked in relays and every time a group of militiamen tried to advance they were forced to lie flat on the ground, after suffering many casualties.

Decimated and terrified, the militiamen returned to their trenches as best they could, and Anvil and his men saw how the attackers turned their attention to them and started to bomb them. A bomb exploded near one of the tanks and damaged the caterpillar gear. The tank had to be abandoned and the others manœuvred to retreat under the bombardment. In the distance, over a ridge, there appeared a number of dark objects that proved to be the Moorish cavalry. The tanks fired on them. Anvil, in a moment of fury, turned his tank towards the Moors and advanced



towards them. As he approached, the impact of bullets against the plates of his tank increased. The tank went, at top speed, in clumsy zigzags along the hard furrows of the parched earth, chasing the elusive horsemen in a hopeless attempt to give battle at close quarters. The water was boiling in the radiators, the barrels of the machine-guns were red-hot and the men in the tanks, with parched lips and feverishly throbbing temples, felt themselves becoming asphyxiated inside their steel ovens.

Anvil at the wheel pressed on with rage, his foot hard on the accelerator making the engine race madly. He had a case of beer-bottles under the seat and from time to time he took one and broke it open with a blow against the wall of the tank to gulp down the whole of the tepid and sticky liquid. His naked, sweating skin shone like a hippopotamus' hide and every time he came in contact with the hot plates of the tank he felt an acute pain of searing flesh.

Suddenly, after a couple of lurches, the tank stopped in the middle of a slope. Without hesitating for a moment Anvil opened the door and jumped out with the tool-box, bullets buzzing past him.

"You are mad!" shouted the others from the rear. "Jump in, you fool! Let us go back quickly!"

The Moors were circling round and round at the gallop, shooting ceaselessly.

"Don't move . . . stop! In a couple of minutes . . . if those swine don't kill me I will get this going again. Keep on shooting at them!"

Without lifting his head, he worked on the engine whilst bullets rained about him. When the Moors noticed that the tank had stopped, they came up to it and increased their firing. Anvil's comrades did their best to stop them but, seeing that it would be impossible to succeed, they shouted:

"They are going to get us! Come on, let's get away!"

Anvil shouted back at them triumphantly: "Wait a moment! I've finished!"

He jumped back into the tank and, again accelerating made straight for the Republican lines, followed by the rest of the tanks. They soon realised that the task was superior to their forces and they had to turn back and make for their own lines, pursued by the Moorish Cavalry. When they returned they saw that there was a general panic amongst the militiamen who were all fleeing towards Madrid. Mixed with the troops were the villagers, carrying away with them all the possessions they could get together. The column of tanks took up the rear, and groups of rebel cavalry, manœuvring rapidly in an encircling movement, attacked them from all sides. Such was the disorder and fear that even the crews of the tanks, thinking that they would not be quick enough, jumped out and abandoned them on the road and took to their heels.

Anvil, in the last tank of the column, seeing all this, flew into a desperate rage and stamped and swore, and banged his head against the plates of the tank. He stopped near one of the abandoned tanks, jumped

inside and, with mighty blows of his hammer, put it out of action. He then smashed the machine-guns and seized all the ammunition he could and took it back to his own tank. The enemy was hot after him. A few yards further down the road he found another abandoned tank. This time he only had time to place a couple of sticks of dynamite, and jump into his tank, in time to escape the rain of debris caused by the explosion. He noticed that the rebels had now ceased to advance. For one hour he went slowly along the road; the country-side was deserted, the peasants had joined the villagers in their flight to safety. He was surrounded by death and desolation.

Exhausted by his terrific efforts, he was overcome by drowsiness which was increased by the loud monotonous noise of the engine.

As he turned a bend in the road, he saw a little girl right in front of him. She could not have been more than nine or ten years of age. Her right arm was extended in the fascist salute. He stopped the tank and jumped out and the little girl, seeing him naked from the waist and horrified by the ferocious expression on his face, flung herself on the ground and screamed with terror:

"Do not kill me! Do not kill me! I'm a good girl!"

Anvil lifted her up in spite of her struggles.

"I'm a good girl. Mummy's good too!" she kept on repeating. She at last realised that the ogre was not going to eat her up, but still hiding her face without

daring to look at him, she lifted her open hand, believing that with that gesture she could ward off the danger which she dreaded. Anvil took her tiny hand in his enormous hairy fist and closing her fingers, said:

"No, sweetie, no, do it like this!" and he showed her his other fist clenched in the anti-fascist salute. The little girl looked at him out of the corner of her eye which were full of tears.

"What are you doing here, little one?" he asked, trying to speak as gently as he could. "Where is your dad and mum?" The little girl hesitated and then answered:

"Are you a fascist?"

"No, my dear. Where are your parents? Are you alone?"

"My dad went to the war."

"Tell me, how did your daddy do, like this or like this?" he asked the child, opening and closing his fist.

"Like this," said the girl, closing her five tiny fingers. Then again she went on saying: "Mummy's a good woman, we never left the house."

"And so is your daddy, my pretty," added Anvil, gently rubbing his rough, unshaven face against the soft skin of the child.

Carrying her in his arms he started to walk in the direction in which she pointed and there, in a hole in the ground about a hundred yards from the road, he saw a young woman. She was lying there with her

head bandaged up with a handkerchief and a blanket wrapped round her legs. Next to her was a tiny tot of a boy, whining and trying to attract the attention of the prostrate woman. Anvil left the girl, and went back to the tank to fetch a bottle of beer, with the help of which he managed to revive her. When she came round she told him that she had carried the children about all day without eating or drinking. She had left the village with the others but, overcome by exhaustion, had lagged behind and had finally fallen and lost consciousness. Before fainting she had told her little girl:

"If you see bad men about don't raise your fist or they will kill us. Do it this way . . ." and she showed her how to make the fascist salute.

The little girl, seeing her mother lying there motionless, had ventured as far as the road and, fearing always to come across bad men who might kill her, she had lifted her hand as her mother had told her, when she saw the tank approach. Anvil took the two children in his arms and, with the mother leaning upon his shoulder, took them all to the tank. He made a bed for the little girl between the supports of a machine-gun, told the mother to sit in the front seat next to him, and gave her the little boy to hold.

"Now lean your head on my shoulder and try to sleep," he told her. The poor woman did as she was told and Anvil felt, against his naked, feverish skin, the soft coolness of the woman's face.

As the evening drew on, a light breeze sprang up and cooled the narrow, stuffy interior of the tank. Anvil felt in his haversack and found some pieces of bread which he gave to the mother and children who, little by little were reviving and beginning to smile at him with gratitude. After some eight miles they arrived at the first village and caught up with the routed militiamen. The officers and political agents were trying to raise their spirits and form a new line of resistance. Anvil stopped the tank in the village square, in the middle of an excited motley crowd. The militiamen that had run away were mixed up with refugees and a new contingent of militiamen that had been hurriedly sent from the headquarters in Madrid to check the retreat.

Anvil jumped out of the tank and faced the crowds of militiamen that surrounded him, shouting:

"Cowards! Poltroons!" He seized one of them by the collar and, dragging him towards him, spat in his face. Then, with a mighty push, threw him down. They made way for him and, without turning his head, he started walking across the square with his heavy gait, followed by the woman who, followed him as though sleep-walking, dragging the children along by their arms.

A man crossed his path.

"What's the matter, Anvil? Where are you going?"

He recognised the young communist who had entered the Montana barracks with him. He was wearing on his

breast and his forage-cap the three stars of a commander. Anvil looked him up and down.

"Where am I going? Home! To wait for the fascists! There is nobody left here but a bunch of wretched cowards! Rubbishy cowards! Dirty cowards!"

He shut himself up and refused to have anything more to do with the war or the revolution. At home with his wife and children he pondered in silence on his defeat, and sank into a despondent and dejected state of mind. Isabel, the woman he had picked up on the roadside during the retreat, and her two children were all living in the house. Antonia, Anvil's wife, did not mind the little ones and was nice to them, but she objected to the other woman and made no secret of her dislike. Her woman's instinct told her that the stranger was a dangerous rival despite her humility and the sadness into which she constantly withdrew.

When the rebellion started, Isabel was living with her husband and children in a little Extremadura village. The husband who was a young workman, joined up at once with a badly armed militiamen unit and she had never heard from him again. News had come to the village that he had been killed during the terrific battles round Badajoz, but nothing was known for certain, and she lived torn between hope and despair until forced to abandon the village with the rest of the terrified inhabitants as the fascists advanced. She had fled from village to village in an attempt to evade the horrors being everywhere perpetrated, until

unable to stand the strain any longer, she had fallen exhausted by the wayside waiting for death, in the pit where Anvil had found her and the children.

Antonia, with that solidarity amongst the poor which causes them to help each other in moments of misfortune, did not begrudge her and her children food or shelter, but nevertheless she could not shake off the mistrust and instinctive jealousy she felt towards that woman, younger than herself, whose silent sadness made her an object of pity and interest. In spite of Anvil's absorption in the tragedy of the defeat she felt he was being drawn towards the stranger and although he tried to hide his interest and was even abrupt and rough in his manner towards her, he could not succeed in concealing his real feelings from his wife's far-seeing sagacity. Antonia's only reassurance came from the intruder's attitude of supreme indifference towards him. In the eyes of the young woman separated from her youthful spouse, he who had been torn from her unwilling arms, was crowned with a halo of heroism, and although she might feel gratitude towards her benefactor not unmixed with fear, she did not feel the slightest inclination towards him. Antonia, who like all women truly in love, overestimated the good qualities and attractions of her man, could not understand how a weak and tender woman could evince so much disdain towards her husband. She was used to putting up with Anvil's love triumphs which he gained by sheer virile exuberance. But the ogre, since his return, had

seemed to have no more strength or will-power, his unerring instinct and splendid vitality never daunted for all the past years of struggle, was gone from him. He had suddenly reached the border-line of old age, though still in possession of all his strength of mind and body. For the first time he felt vanquished, the hand of age heavy on his heart.

His feelings towards the stranger were combined of a morbid tenderness, a soft affection he had never before experienced, and he was afraid to let her see what he considered a weakness, so he tried to cover it with harsh words and rough ways. This was precisely the reason why Isabel remained insensible to him, cold and aloof, hermetically sealed in the love she felt for her husband, her true mate whose place the old ogre could never possibly fill.

Antonia realised exactly what was taking place and her womanly pride reacted against the disdain the other woman showed, and subconsciously she began to try to foster in her the admiration for Anvil she felt she ought to feel, the absence of which was as bad an offence as an act of infidelity.

While Anvil in his workshop brooded silently over the tribulations of his personal defeat, which in some way he associated with the defeat of the cause of the people, the two women spent many hours talking about him, and little by little the jealous wife aroused in the stranger an interest and awareness of this extraordinary man.

Anvil, diffident and sad, could not get over the fact that for the first time in his life he was beaten. Comrades called on him several times to tell him that the war was going on and that the rebel army was at the gates of Madrid and yet all was not lost for the people.

"They will find me in my house, when you let them through," answered Anvil. "I shall defend nothing but this, my home, my wife and my children. And I shall watch to see if you defend your own as well as I do. I am not going to join up or associate myself with cowards any more."

And he sent them rudely away, longing to be left alone with that morbid feeling so new to him which had its own voluptuousness.

"Anvil has turned reactionary. He is a blasted bourgeois," the comrades said to one another when they left him.

"What has happened to him is that he is getting old. Old people are good for nothing," said others.

One day there came to the house, Luis, the communist who had broken into the Montana barracks, and had been raised to the rank of major in the republican army. They had met again during the retreat. Luis spoke openly to Anvil.

"What is the matter with you, Anvil? What is this change? Have you suddenly become too old?"

"Well . . . we shall see that when the moment arrives for me to defend my own."

"What I have to defend is not my house but the revolution," answered the communist petulantly.

Anvil became infuriated.

"How are you going to defend it? What with? Perhaps with those guns that do not shoot, with those aeroplanes that can't fly, with those tanks that can't travel? And with mock armies of terrified workers and peasants who run away all the time before the enemy. With revolutionaries who the moment they see a Moor behave like frightened hares?"

"You are trying to find excuses for your own lack of guts," answered the communist. "There are men in plenty and we have more material every day. The cowards have had their run. We have good fighters now. And we have guns, tanks, aeroplanes in great quantities and all efficient. Russia, the mother of the proletarian countries, is sending us all we need."

Major Luis had called on Anvil because in Valencia hundreds of ultra-modern tanks sent by Russia had just arrived and although there were with them a number of Russian drivers and mechanics, the Government needed Spaniards like Anvil. After a lot of discussion Luis prevailed on him to rejoin the militiamen and to consent to drive one of the Russian tanks.

Perhaps his decision was inspired to a great extent by the desire to enter the kitchen and announce to the two women with a jovial air of indifference:

"I am going to the war again." Perhaps the only thing he was seeking was the look of admiration that

would flash from Isabel's eyes. The heroic decision was perhaps a kind of reaction against the inferiority complex he felt in the presence of the intruder. He was inwardly convinced that he was not up to the effort he was making. He knew that he was no more the energetic man of action, full of self-confidence, that works miracles and acts as a protecting force for heroes. He knew that he had no more that interior flame burning irresistibly within. He felt that he was going to perdition. Why was he doing it? He could not have said.

He had lost his faith in the people along the roads of Extremadura, seeing how the armed workers and the peasants had fled before the military. The anarchist Utopia in which he had believed had vanished when he felt for the first time in his life the desire to act as a despot, to shoot *en masse* the thousands of militiamen who had refused to fight. The remnants of his anarchic beliefs had crumbled away in the presence of the Russian soldiers who had accompanied the tanks. He could not understand how communists could submit to such iron discipline, and he who detested any kind of submission saw all his theories overthrown.

With this new feeling of being vanquished and undecided, he yielded for the first time in his life to the pressure of authority and accepted orders issued, without flinching. Under the command of the Russian officers shouted by interpreters, like an automaton, he soon learned to work the modern tanks. When the

first batch of recruits had been duly prepared he volunteered to go to the front as a driver of one of the tanks. The Russian non-commissioned officer who was to accompany him was reluctant to have him drive and the Spaniard realised at once the possible meaning of the objection:

"What does he say?" he asked the interpreter.

"He says that he prefers to go to the front with a younger man than you."

"Tell him," replied Anvil, "to get into the tank and to shut up. It remains still to be seen whether the young Russians know how to fight as well as the old Spaniards. I want to see for myself."

He faced the Russian officer and placing his big hand heavily on the shoulder of the man said in a challenging voice:

"Come on, lad, let us go together. I will drive and you give orders. If we have to cross the enemy's lines, don't worry. I will go ahead unless you are afraid to go on. When you have had enough, ask me to turn round and go back. Do you understand?"

Anvil told the interpreter to translate what he had said, very clearly. Then he turned his back to the officer and walked away.

The first group of tanks to go to the front started from Valencia at dawn the following day, and at night-fall they passed through the streets of Madrid amidst the clamorous ovations of the multitude. Anvil drove the advance tank and the Russian officer, with

the top of his body emerging from the turret, stood at attention giving the communist salute with clenched fist, like the other officers in the tanks that followed. Anvil had recovered much of his usual high spirits. Although the officer had tried to explain that his name was Ivan, Anvil insisted on calling him "Juanito," in a condescending paternal manner. As they progressed he turned time and again towards the officer, always erect in the turret, and said to him, although he knew he could not understand:

"Come, come Juanito, enough showing off. . . . You brag more than a bullfighter."

And he laughed heartily at the puerile vanity of the young officer who had come from the other side of the world, ready to sacrifice his life for those people who stood watching the tanks and with whom he had no other means of contact than the raising of a clenched fist.

The Russian tanks were not the old creaks belonging to the Spanish army. They left Madrid at dawn and travelled at 30 miles an hour so that they were soon in line at the front sector, some 20 miles from the capital. When the order to attack was given the tanks started in perfect formation followed by the militiamen columns. The enemy at first disconcerted by their unexpected presence abandoned their positions which were at once occupied by Government troops. The rebel front was broken. The tanks were ordered to continue to advance so as to surround the groups of rebels that still

resisted. The enemy's fire however, increased in desperate waves, and although the tanks suffered but little from it, the militiamen attacking behind, were being mowed down by fire from the machine-guns of the hidden enemy positions still uncaptured. The infantry attack began to falter and waver. Behind Anvil's tank was a company of infantry commanded by Major Luis, and as the tank progressed they were being decimated. The score of men still left bolted when from the flank they received a deadly fire from machine-guns. Some of the men flung themselves to the ground and Luis furious tried in vain to spur them up to continue the attack. When he realised that he could do no more he continued marching behind the tank doggedly, in the hope that his example would make the men get up and follow him. No one moved however, and Major Luis found himself alone. Anvil and the Russian officer could see him walking behind the tank and they marvelled at the heroism and foolhardiness of the man.

"There you are, Juanito. . . . See how brave the Spaniards are," he shouted to the Russian officer.

The tanks had been ordered to advance as far as certain fixed points, and in spite of the failure of the infantry attack, the Russian officer and Anvil decided to go ahead to the place that had been indicated to them as the limit of advance. Behind them at a hundred yards distance marched the frail form of Major Luis.

"He is mad, he is mad," said Anvil, who could hear the rain of bullets against the tank.

They stopped and signalled to him to approach. They wanted to save his life. He was crouching now under the rain of bullets and crept forward hurriedly. He was quite close to them when they saw him suddenly raise his arms and fall to the ground. Anvil jumped out and ran towards him. He picked up the fallen man from the ground and carrying him across his shoulders laid him down in the tank. He saw that he had a bullet wound in the chest.

The tank started up again. Anvil without turning to ask the Russian's permission continued to make straight for the enemy lines. Right and left he was leaving behind him enemy posts which kept shooting at the tank with their machine-guns. Meanwhile the Russian officer kept an eye on his instructions and on his maps. At times Anvil turned towards the Russian and shouted at him:

"Well. . . . How do you like it, Juanito?"

"Da, da, Jaracho," replied the Russian without turning a hair.

They arrived at a batch of houses marked with a cross on the map they had been given.

"Stoit," ordered the Russian.

Anvil understood the Russian word for "halt" and said sarcastically "What? Are you afraid? . . . I can go ahead if you want me to, you know, Juanito. . . ."

"Stoit," repeated the Russian.

"As you wish, my lad," said Anvil shrugging his shoulders.

He opened the door of the tank and jumped outside. There was no one in the houses.

"The fascists hounds have run away from here, anyhow," said Anvil.

He went back to the tank and tended Major Luis' wound as best he could.

"It would be a pity if he died. There are not many like him," was his only comment.

After examining the position and taking some notes the Russian ordered Anvil to retreat. The militiamen had not supported them, but they had accomplished their mission.

On the way back the enemy posts increased their fire. But the Russian tank was a marvel: light, bullet-proof and swift it passed unscathed through the most vicious barrages. As they approached the Government lines the fire decreased in intensity. They came to a glade at the end of which there was a hamlet perched on the top of a hill. They made straight for it imagining it to be occupied by the Government troops. As the tank entered the hamlet, an officer in the red military cape of the Moorish troops came towards them. Anvil had lifted the trap to see what was happening and the Russian thinking he was in friendly territory stood erect in the turret. When Anvil saw the enemy officer he quickly shut up the trap again.

The officer seeing a tank coming from his own lines

imagined that it was sent to him for reinforcement and he saluted the Russian officer raising the arm in the fascist salute.

"You are just in time," he said. "The battery I have here is keeping the enemy at bay, but only a tank can put them on the run."

The Russian looked at him without understanding. The officer surprised at receiving no reply asked:

"Don't you understand what I say? Are you Italian?"

"Da, da," answered the Russian.

Suddenly suspicious the officer ordered them to come out of the tank.

The Russian realising at last, the truth of the situation shut the turret door, and Anvil manœuvred the tank as though to park it alongside the road. The Russian manned the machine-gun and started to shoot. The officer and the soldiers with him fell under their fire. Cleverly driven by Anvil, the tank went up and down the streets of the hamlet mowing down the enemy soldiers who tried to escape in all directions. In a little square they found the battery that was firing against the Government posts. The tank advanced spitting fire and crushing under its weight men, guns and stores of ammunition.

Finally one of the caterpillar chains caught in the stump of a tree and the tank stopped. Anvil pressed his foot on the accelerator in vain. The enemy quick to notice the predicament in which their assailants

found themselves, tried to approach, but the Russian officer kept them at bay with the fire of his machine-gun. Some soldiers went up to the roof of the house nearest and from there they poured the contents of some petrol-cans over the tank, and by means of some straw set fire to it. But Anvil managed at last to free the tank and drove on.

When they left the hamlet the tank was a mass of flame. Their speed caused the petrol to burn like an enormous torch. The Russian kept on firing and Anvil, wrapped himself in a blanket he found under the seat to protect his skin against the rapidly increasing and unbearable heat inside the burning tank. He was forcing the engine to its limit and making for a part of the country where he imagined that the Government lines were established. Would he be able to get there alive? The heat stung him every time the jerky movements of the tank threw him against the burning plates. He could not breathe and feared to lose consciousness and faint at any moment. They were now incarcerated within a living sheet of flame. Even the blanket was scorching and Anvil felt it burning his flesh at every movement. He felt too, that he had no more strength left. For the last time he stamped on the accelerator, his agony accentuating the gesture. The tank now out of control, zig-zagged along the road and came to a standstill at the bottom in a hollow in the ground.

They had been lucky enough to reach friendly territory. When some soldiers ran up to try and open

the tank, they managed finally to extract two half-burned bodies: the Russian officer and Major Luis.

Anvil was still grasping the driving-wheel. They had to use force to detach his hands from it, some of his skin adhered to it as they pulled him away. He was nothing by a swollen and monstrous form, yet . . . he still had a spark of life left in him.

They took him to hospital in Madrid. Nothing could be done for him. Wrapped in bandages with only one bloodshot eye showing, he still lived for a few hours. But he sensed the presence of the two unhappy women on each side of his bed, and for a moment his eye flashed with a last challenge a supreme effort drawn from the fast ebbing tide of his strong vitality. . . . And two helpless women saw and understood.

COUNCIL OF WORKERS

He got up in a fury and said:

"I wish to address the meeting."

"I can't allow you to do so," answered the chairman.

"I insist; I must speak."

"And I tell you again it's impossible."

"For the last time, Comrade Chairman, I demand that you let me speak," he shouted menacingly.

"Your case has been sufficiently discussed already. Why do you wish to bring that up all over again?" he shrugged, "but if you must, then go on, speak . . . get it off your chest. . . ."

The man addressed rose in a cold frenzy. He said: "I have asked to address the meeting, firstly to tell the chairman that he is a low-down son-of-a-bitch, and then——"

That was the end of the proceedings, for at those words, pandemonium broke loose in the room. Pistols were whipped out of pockets and the man who had spoken found himself surrounded by a menacing crowd making excited gesticulations and hurling insults.

"Dirty fascist! . . . Traitor! . . . Yellow dog! . . ."

Daniel, with his back against the wall, gazed intently on the men about him, holding himself ready to spring at the throat of the first to lay hands on him. The

ferocious expression on his face, as well as his broad shoulders and huge powerful hands hardened by years of manual labour, kept the others at bay. He managed to reach the door by sliding along the wall sideways without taking his eyes from his enemies, none of whom dared to bar his way.

When he reached the iron gates of the factory, he turned towards the building from which he had just emerged and spat out:

"Filthy lot of lousy swine!"

He started for home, his hands sunk deep in his pockets. As he passed the little wine-shop round the corner Bartolo joined him, trying not to attract the attention of the people in the shop, and the two men walked on side by side without speaking a word. After a mile Bartolo, whose bespectacled eyes were fixed on Daniel, ventured to ask:

"Well? What did they say?"

"The skunks," grunted Daniel. "They went for me the moment I started to tell them what I thought. . . . And, believe me, I had plenty to say."

"Then. . . . It means that next Saturday we shall be out of work?"

"Out of work, out of work, . . . That is the least of it. The moment the neighbours know why we have been fired, because we are suspected of being fascists, the militiamen will be informed and we shall be taken for a ride."

"What shall we do then?"

"I don't know. . . . We must just go back to work. . . . We must attend the Council of Workers' meetings again and insist on a hearing. If it comes to it, and there's no other argument left, we must break the neck of one of those dirty delegates. Anything but submit to be treated as if we were a couple of dead sewer-rats to be cast out on the dung-heap. Don't you realise man, that if a Council of Workers throws you out of a factory, the least that happens to you is that you can never earn a living again, and you risk being shot at any moment? I have been expecting every hour to have a militiaman arrest me and take me away to a convenient wall."

"Murderers!"

"After all, Daniel, perhaps the most dangerous place for us is the factory. They want work for their own political friends. And if any of them needed a job they think nothing of killing you or me to give it to one of their protégés. Let us leave on our own accord without waiting to be fired, and try to save our skins."

"But why should they want to kill me?" Daniel shouted furiously.

"They told you *why*. You are a slave of the bourgeois."

"Or because I have been *their* slave—their servant"

"It all boils down to the same thing. Why did the boss sack the extremists after the failure of the October revolution? Why did the Civil Guard shoot them down

then? Because they wouldn't submit. Because they refused to give up the fight for their freedom. And now those very men ask you to submit to their rule, to humble yourself before them . . . and if you don't do that they will kill you."

"But don't I earn my wages by honest work?"

"Work, work. . . . There are too many men working. Work used to be given by the factory owners as a form of charity. Now the Council of Workers bestow work on you as if it were a prize. You see, neither you nor I have cared much for politics and have had little or nothing to do with the revolution. . . . If we were only given a chance. . . ."

"But they don't want us. Only a few moments ago when I tried to explain my case by showing up the despicable conduct of the chairman, they refused to hear me, they wanted to kill me. . . ."

"There's only one way to get out of this and I am going to try it."

"What do you mean?"

"The delegates of the Council of Workers, who are nearly all communists and socialists, will only give employment to revolutionary workers. And they know we are not that . . . they even accuse us of being fascists. . . ."

"I have never been a fascist."

"That makes no difference. You accepted the boss's authority, you recognised their rights, you complied with their whims and studied their interests.

You never will be accepted by socialists or communists. . . .”

“So what?”

“Well, it’s quite simple. . . .” He stopped for a moment and then stated shortly, “join the anarchists.”

“What, I an anarchist?”

“Yes, both of us. That is the only solution. Look here, Daniel, the anarchists are as revolutionary as the members of the Council of Workers. They are strong, they are greatly feared, they never let their own side down. At the present moment a worker who can’t show an identity book from the revolutionary syndicates is like a pariah, and any militiamen may shoot him down like a dog. The communists will not accept us in their ranks. But I am sure that the anarchists, who need good workers in their syndicates, will take us. Now come on. Let us get the necessary assurance that we are true revolutionaries from the anarchists.”

“Do you think they will give it to us?”

“I think so. I have a few friends amongst them. They are all right. Much better anyhow, than the disgusting hypocrites who call themselves communists. They have a heart. They will preach to us, they will frighten us a little, but if we appeal to their feelings and if they think we can be redeemed by them, they’ll open their arms to us. The anarchists love to redeem people, to convert them to their creed. . . . Hundreds of fascists, belonging to the best families of Madrid, have

been so . . . *redeemed* already,” and Bartolo winked a knowing eye. Then, lowering his voice, he added, “Yes, redeemed . . . at so much per candidate, you understand?”

“But then, they’re a lot of hypocritical cads, too.”

“Well, I should say that some are, but a good many are sincere fanatics, followers of their creed and ideal. What do you care, anyhow? What we need is to save our lives and to find work. Come let us go to the anarchists.”

Daniel, somewhat unwillingly, let himself be dragged to the Anarchists headquarters. There they met a friend of Bartolo, one Felipe, a man of advanced years who had been an anarchist all his life. At times a common thief and at others an apostle of his creed, wandering about country inns and at intervals paying visits to prison as guest of the police. He was a thinnish man, small, with dark deep-set eyes, and a face dried up like a kipper. He had thin hair turning grey and a scraggy neck which could hardly support the weight of his enormous head. His chest was hollowed like that of a consumptive.

He received Bartolo in a jesting mood.

“What wind blows you here, my dear reactionary? Are you coming to receive your due. . . . I mean, the bullet in the wind-pipe you deserve?”

Bartolo answered in the same jocular tone, trying to be as easy and indifferent as possible.

“I thought you were at the front, Felipe. Men like you are needed there.”

"Yes, yes, I was there. I was at the Sierra front, right from the start, but I stopped a bullet and then I contracted pneumonia. I am still convalescent."

"But you are a strong and healthy fellow."

The little man straightened himself up, flattered.

"I don't know so much. . . . I have a weak heart. Getting old, my boy. I have gone through a lot. When I was ill with pneumonia the doctor thought I was going to die. That is why they ordered me back from the Sierras, and now I have a job in Madrid."

"I see . . . a kind of cushy job, eh? . . . Good meals, good bed and all the rest?"

"Nothing of the kind, my boy. This revolution is a serious business. I can't go to the Sierras now because I am a wreck, but I've been given a stiff job here. It is true that it does not require much physical exertion, but. . . ."

Then, lowering the pitch of his voice, he added: "Don't tell any one. . . . I am one of the execution squad in the main Madrid prison."

Daniel could not help uttering an exclamation of astonishment mixed with disgust.

"And you tell me that your heart is not strong, comrade?" he asked.

"We anarchists are made of tough stuff. We know how to stiffen up when it comes to doing our revolutionary duty. What those tender-hearted communist youths dare not do . . . I, old Felipe, the anarchist, am ready to accomplish when it is a question of

helping the cause. Even if my heart sickens at the task. . . ."

Daniel felt a sinking sensation in his stomach. His healthy normality shrank from contact with this wretched individual who was obviously a pathological degenerate with a lust for morbid cruelty. Bartolo, seeing that the conversation was taking a bad turn, diplomatically brought it back to the point dealing with their visit. Old Felipe was easily convinced, so he took them to the Secretary's office where another comrade made them fill up some forms and told them that they would have to wait the final decision of the leaders.

This took a long time. At last one of the leaders arrived, late as usual, for the anarchists paid little attention to punctuality. Felipe left after warmly recommending Daniel and Bartolo as adherents. The leader received the two young men with severity, listened to their request, frowned, addressed them in a terrifying peroration and finally consented to accept them conditionally, on their giving their word of honour that they were not fascists.

This they did. Daniel with absolute sincerity, Bartolo making certain subtle reservations in connection with the past.

"Your past does not concern us," stated the leader solemnly. "Every man is capable of redemption and a change of heart. One may have been a criminal even a fascist, either through ignorance or driven by

hunger. What matters is, that one day class consciousness must be awakened. . . ."

Finally they left, with their identity papers in order in their pockets. For the first time since the war had started they could walk about the darkened streets without fearing for their lives. A militiaman stopped them and flashing his lantern before their eyes, cried:

"Halt! Who goes there? . . ."

"Members of the anarchist party," they answered.

"*Salud*, comrades," replied the militiaman after glancing at their papers.

Daniel and Bartolo could breathe freely now. They became men again, and they went to their respective homes thinking that at last they were going to be able to enjoy a peaceful sleep.

When Daniel's steps sounded on the stairs his wife, who had been waiting for hours behind the door imagining the worst, dropped down, half-fainting from nervous exhaustion. Then, making a tremendous effort, she pulled herself together and rose, trembling all over with anguish, and went to get food for him. She set the table and went to bed.

Daniel pushed the food away that she had waited so long to serve to him, pulled out of his pocket his brand-new identity book and looked at it over and over again by the light of the humble familiar lamp, with its silk shade fringed with dangling beads. After a time he took pencil and paper and clenching his teeth began to write:

"To the Council of Workers of 'Metallic Constructions Ltd.': Daniel Lopez, a lathe operator of the anarchist party, addresses a complaint to the Council. 'Comrades, having been wrongfully dismissed without any justification. . . .'"

* * * * *

"Are you going to be stupid enough to let those scoundrels escape us?"

Comrade Carlos, secretary to the executive Committee of the Council of Workers, threw down on the table with a furious smack the claim sent by the lathe turner, Daniel.

"What does he say?" asked Esteban, another member of the Council.

"He pretends that he has never been a fascist, and that all he has done in the past was to try to hold on to his job."

"Sure . . . he did that, by being a traitor to his comrades."

"He says that his children had to have food."

"I have children also, and they have gone without food for days."

"He adds that if he has been a traitor to the strikers on some occasions, all the delegates of the Council have also been traitors many times."

"Not I."

"And he says that he can prove their treachery."

"He is a filthy cad."

"And—listen to this—he says that now he is a member of the anarchist party and that his party will defend his proletarian rights."

"Would you believe it?"

"We must put him on the spot without delay."

"Hold your horses, my friend. The first thing we must do is to counter his clever little game. To start with he says that all the members of the Council have been traitors at some time or another. We can't leave it at that. The anarchists would be only too glad to hear it. Then we must in our turn charge him with treason and prove it. After that the militiamen can deal with him. But first we must prove his many treasons. Don't worry, his record warrants him being taken for a dozen rides."

"And what about the other, Bartolo?"

"He is shrewder, but he's much more frightened. He writes to the Council to say that although he is now a member of the anarchist party he is ready to give up his job in the factory to any other worker who is more trusted by the syndicate. He only asks that in that case he should be given a testimonial signed by the Council enabling him to get work somewhere else. He tries to cover his retreat."

"We must expel both of them."

"Don't worry, we'll get our intelligence service busy with their case. Every step in their lives will be traced. Once that is done we must inform the anarchist party, and we shall see if they still continue

to protect them. The best thing will be to prove that they have been active members of the fascist party. As you know, the secret list of the party is now in our hands. We can find out at once. . . ."

Comrade Carlos, who had dictatorial powers in the Council and great authority with the communist party, started the detective work he had in his mind with a simple telephone call.

From the luxurious office of the management of the factory there went forth the hunters' tally-ho that was to let loose on Daniel and Bartolo the bloodhounds of the workers secret police.

Through the wide bay windows, workers could be seen entering the building to take the place of those who had finished their shift. Neither war nor revolution had made much difference to them. Daniel and Bartolo walked apart from the others and silently and with great energy went to work. They never spoke a word to any one. In the office, the shorthand girl-typists were busy as usual spoiling many sheets of paper because, instead of heading the letters "Comrade" as they had been told to do, they kept forgetting and beginning with the "Dear Sir" of the old régime.

Outside the main door of the headquarters stood old Tudela, impeccable in his gold-braided uniform. The revolution had failed to make Tudela dispense with this magnificence which covered his bulky corporation. The old commissioner was trusted by the

syndicate, of which he had been a member for years, and although he insisted on wearing the uniform in which he had done his previous duty as a well-trained servant to the chiefs, he now treated the delegates with the same courteous and ceremonious respect. He exhibited the same condescending benevolence for the rude familiarities of the delegates that he used to have for the nasty fits of temper of his former bosses. His life-long job as servant had taught him to understand and to make excuses for the moods and injustices of the masters. Tudela, at sixty years of age, had come to the conclusion that any chief is always arbitrary and violent and often unintelligent. From the first day of the change-over he had shown to Carlos, now managing director, the same benevolent affection he had shown the owner-master. The new one seemed to him, perhaps, harsher than the old one, but a little more reasonable. In the depths of his slave-mind he thought one as bad as the other, and thus he could afford to find excuses for both.

Comrade Carlos when in a good mood indulged in familiar joking with old Tudela.

"How goes it, old fellow? Do you know that the fascists, your co-religionists, have suffered a heavy defeat in the Sierras?"

"I am no fascist."

"But you are a blasted reactionary, anyhow."

"I admit that many years ago, in the time of the last Carlist war, I was so inclined."

"And were your friends as criminal as they are now?"

Tudela shook his head from side to side in protest and answered:

"Then we fought man against man in a clean way. There were no aeroplanes then of the kind which only the other day killed my little grandson in his cradle. . . . Then . . ." and old Tudela grew excited as he remembered the past . . . "then, Cucala, the Carlist chieftain, when we were going to start a scrap with the Government troops, used to give us three cartridges each and tell us who formed his trusted band, 'When the fight is over you have to return at least one cartridge.' That was the sort of war we made, a couple of shots and, 'forwards' to meet the enemy face to face. Now—now things are different. A filthy war, that is what this is."

Tudela paused.

". . . To-day, men, women and children, are killed like vermin," he went on. "Both sides do it, comrade Carlos. There are crimes on both sides and——"

"That will do, Tudela. Shut up, if you don't want me to denounce you to the execution patrol," Carlos broke in violently.

He made for the door, and Tudela, who had retreated a couple of steps to keep a respectful distance, hastened to open it for him. Carlos, in a temper, pushed him aside with a jibe: "Come, come, man. Stop crawling like a worm."

He went out. In the darkness of the corridor,



the man who had been waiting for him approached him timidly.

It was Valentin, the foreman. Like a damned soul he had wandered about the factory since the beginning of the war, changed into the ghost of himself. Day and night he might be seen walking about hanging his head, and glancing rapidly from side to side as though seeking for some one to address him a friendly word or greet him with a look of affectionate regard. The workers all gave him a wide berth as if he were a leper, and stopped talking the moment they saw him come towards them. He lived in an atmosphere of contempt and hostility. Sometimes he heard the workers say behind his back:

"When are we going to shoot that despicable cur?"

Valentin lowered his head further and went on his way, still trying to find a friendly face that would respond to his humble, forced smile. His clear eyes wore the expression of a pleading dog before an angry master. Unable to stand the strain any longer, he sometimes used to ask himself:

"Yes, when are they going to kill me? Why don't they do it soon?"

They did not kill him. The militiamen had looked for him at the start of the revolution, as they had done in the case of all other foremen of the factory. They wanted to plant a bullet in his heart, remembering his servile attitude towards capitalism and his oppression of the workers. He was lucky that they did not find him

at once. He was the most detested of all the foremen, for he had been the trusted man of the management, the man who had to put into practice whatever victimisations were considered necessary; the informer, the strike-breaker, and as such he was known to all. As he knew every hiding corner in the building better than anyone else, he managed to conceal himself while the militiamen killed on the spot other foremen who had much less to fear from the revolution than Valentin.

He was found at last, but then a serious problem arose.

As the engineers and all the other important technicians had either fled or been killed, Valentin was the only one left who could understand the fundamental technicalities of the machines, and if they killed him the work would have to stop. He alone knew the formulas and certain secrets of construction. The problem was debated in the Council of Workers. There was unanimity in the agreement that Valentin was a hundred times over a traitor to the proletarian cause and deserved to be delivered to summary justice as put into practice by the execution squads of the militiamen. But he could not be spared. The extremists, full of fury, clamoured for his death, but others, more prudent, if not more merciful, voted for his reprieve.

Comrade Carlos, the great leader, who understood very well the Russian way of handling difficult cases,

knew what to do. Valentin would not be delivered to the militamen yet—not yet; for the time being he would remain in the factory under the watchful eyes of a couple of trustworthy comrades. They would be with him constantly, and besides acting as gaolers, their duty and their mission would be to learn from him all that was necessary to ensure the continuance of the work. Once these two men were ready to take his place, Valentin would be shot. To prevent the execution squad getting their man before his time, they decided he must not leave the factory for a single moment, day or night, and he was kept there as though in prison. He was like a trapped animal.

As the days went by, the two gaoler-pupils who had been cleverly chosen for their intelligence and devotion to the proletarian cause made rapid progress, and Valentin realised that they would soon know all they wanted and that his end was near.

His wretched existence was a constant dilemma of fear; fear of being killed if it was suspected that he did not teach both men all he knew, and fear that if he taught them too much he would still be killed. He often told himself that it would be better if the militamen came to finish this constant torture.

But several weeks passed, nothing happened, and once more he began to hope against hope.

"I have served them loyally," he thought. "Perhaps they will pardon me. . . ." But he knew they hated him beyond any thought of mercy. In the last meeting

of the Council, Benito, one of the delegates, had brought up the question in a brutal outburst.

"I would like to know when that filthy traitor of a foreman is going to be expelled from the factory and delivered into the hands of the execution squad of the militamen?"

Benito was one of the revolutionary leaders of the factory. A strong man, rebellious and violent, he had always been leader of the strikers. The owners had fired him and he had returned to his job, thanks to the revolution. He kept alive in the Council, the spirit of revenge and hatred.

"When are we going to put an end to the life of that enemy of the proletarians?" he urged.

Comrade Carlos replied evasively:

"When the right moment arrives, when it suits us. We are not going to endanger the working of our industry and our commercial output just because comrade Benito chooses to be impatient."

"Well, I refuse to work under the same roof with that individual any longer. It would be better for the factory to shut its doors, than continue to put up with his insulting presence."

Carlos smiled imperturbably.

"And if he is expelled to-day, I shall go to the Council," he went on evenly.

"You can spare your threats, comrade. No matter how good a revolutionary you are, you are less important than the foreman. So put that in your pipe."

Benito jumped to his feet in a fury.

"Is that so? What we need here, I suppose, is to harbour hypocritical skunks and those who do their best to protect them. This is about the blasted limit! The revolution has triumphed so that at least I can avenge myself on that sort of rubbish, and that's the only thing that interests me. If the factory has to stop working, to hell with the factory, and even the revolution can go to hell if I'm to be told to put up with such humiliation."

He left, elbowing his way out violently, and when he reached the door he turned to the other delegates and shouted:

"I'll show you how revolutionary justice is done!"

The door slammed.

Valentin, whom some busybody had informed of what was taking place, was patiently waiting for comrade Carlos in the corridor.

"I have come to thank you," he said with tears in his eyes, "for the defence you made for me in the Council."

Carlos returned coldly:

"You are mistaken. I do not defend traitors. I defend the factory."

And he turned his back on the trembling man.

That very morning at dawn, a patrol of militiamen appeared. Taking advantage of the fact that the place was guarded only by an old frightened door-keeper, they entered unceremoniously and after a difficult

search found Valentin and removed him from his hiding place. He stood at bay like a hunted animal that can go no further.

They took him away in a car which started in the direction of the outskirts of Madrid. No one ever knew what became of him. But Benito had fulfilled his threat.

When Carlos was informed of what had taken place, he clenched his fist.

"Sheer idiocy," he exclaimed. "That fool Benito has escaped from the bourgeois, but if he goes on like this we shall have to kill him ourselves."

With that he got ready to start his daily work.

* * * * *

With the sleeve of his greasy overall, Daniel kept wiping away the cold perspiration that covered his forehead. He continued his rambling defence. He could not find the words he wanted, and he hesitated, there were long painful pauses and silences; finally he repeated what he had already said time and time again. The workers who formed the tribunal stared at him immovably. Their frigid silence disconcerted him. But with a great effort he continued defending himself.

"Have you anything more to say, comrade?" the chairman asked, during one of those pauses in which the accused seemed to stop as if on the edge of an abyss.

"Yes, yes. . . . I have much more to say. . . .

But . . . somehow . . . I can't remember what it was."

What Daniel was so eager to tell them in his clumsy speech was of the indignation he felt invading his heart against the inhuman "revolutionary justice" they were applying to him.

"I have never been a revolutionary," he said. "To be a revolutionary is not a duty, it is an inclination. No one can call me a traitor to the revolution because I never undertook to help the movement. I earned my wages by honest work. I was a good comrade. Was I not? I served the boss. . . ."

He noticed a sneer on the lips of one of the delegates and flew into a rage:

"Yes, and so did you and the whole lot of you. You may well deny that now, but you know you did, you swine!"

There was a pandemonium of protest in the Council.

"Yes, the whole lot of you, I say," shouted Daniel at the top of his voice. "When a strike failed, you used to humble yourselves before the owners, and you all licked their feet to get your jobs back."

The chairman stopped the tumult by banging with a hammer on the table. "If you want to have a hearing, limit yourself to justifying your actions of the past without insulting the comrades," he ordered.

Daniel lowered his voice:

"I did serve the boss. The factory belonged to him. I did my best to be on friendly terms with him. You

fought him the best you could; I did not. You wanted to be masters; I was contented to take orders. You wanted to own the factory; I never dreamed of that. Now you are the owners! Now you are masters here! Well, what of it? I only ask you to let me live in peace and get on with my job as the boss did. I am not interested in your victory, I am not asking my share of it. I did not belong to your revolutionary organisations, I was not a member of your syndicates or your unions, but still I have the right to live and to work. Or is it that you are to be harder task-masters than the bourgeois were?"

He stopped, afraid of his own eloquence, and looked round. The faces of the delegates remained impassive. Only from a far corner of the room he felt a sympathetic emanation like a blessed ray of light urging him to go on. Don Jorgito, the old administrator of the factory, who now formed part of the Council as adviser, although not permitted to take part in the debates, nor to cast a vote, was encouraging him with his mute sympathy.

Daniel went on:

"I have always been alone. Alone in the gutter, fighting hunger and misery and that was how I became a man; alone I learned how to tackle my job, and alone I had to defend myself against the authorities who tried to exploit me. I owe nothing to any man. What do you want of me? What is the charge against me?"

There was a long silence.

"Have you anything more to say, comrade?" he was asked.

"No."

"Then you can go. The Council will study your case and you will be informed of the results of the findings of your judges."

Bartolo was ordered to take Daniel's place. He was frightened and trembling, and he looked askance, shifting his glance from man to man. He mumbled some clumsy excuses, and asked to be pardoned, promising to be loyal to the revolution in future. As a proof of his solidarity with the movement he showed his brand-new identity book admitting him a member of the anarchist party.

The socialist and communist delegates laughed at him when he produced the document. At that, the anarchist delegate protested, and rose to defend Bartolo.

"Have you been a member of the yellow syndicates, formed by the owners, yes or no?" he asked Bartolo.

"Yes; I could not help it. . . . I was forced to," he admitted.

"That makes no difference," declared the anarchist delegate. "A worker, when forced and threatened by starvation, may do as you did. The question is, are you a fascist?"

Bartolo knew that his life depended on his answer.

"No!" he said.

"Were you not in the lists of the Spanish fascist organisation?"

"No," repeated Bartolo.

"That will do. You can go."

When Bartolo left the room, the anarchist delegate protested violently against the systematic persecution of a member of his party by the communists.

"We should not be suspicious, if you did not enrol fascists in your party," he was told.

"We do nothing of the kind."

"Bartolo is a fascist, and should have been shot long ago. But it won't be long now, for our militiamen will soon get hold of him."

"And I say that you shan't touch that man, do you understand? My party will not allow it. He belongs to us and we are ready to defend him."

"Even if he is a convicted fascist?"

"No. If you can prove he is that, if he has lied to us, we shan't wait for you to kill him. We anarchists know how to act swiftly when the moment arrives, and our justice is severer when there is an enemy in our midst than in other cases. Can you say as much?"

"Well, then, what of it? If I prove to you that Bartolo is a fascist, and that he is a traitor to your party?" interrupted Carlos in a challenging tone.

"Prove it to me, and I will kill him like a dog with my own hands. But you must prove it first. Until then I will see to it that he is protected."

"I can prove it to you. Enough said," said Carlos. "Now let us consider the question of those two enemies of the proletariat remaining in the factory. . . .

What happens after will be a matter for the militiamen."

There was, of course, no doubt in Bartolo's case. He was nothing but a miserable underling of the bourgeoisie, with numberless treasons on his conscience. They voted for his expulsion with only the protest of the anarchist delegates, who reserved the right to ask for a new trial.

"It is understood that you shall not deliver him to the militiamen and that nothing will happen to him until my party has had plenty of time to study his case and find out all about him," insisted the anarchist delegate.

"Comrade," he was told, "we have nothing more to do in the matter. It is a question for the militiamen. If they find him guilty, they will know what to do."

In the case of Daniel there was, however, a long discussion. The delegates hated him even more than Bartolo, the traitor, for the strong-willed and manly Daniel was a more dangerous enemy to the cause than most of the poor devils who were being killed every day. A man like Daniel was the worst kind of enemy of the revolution and of the dictatorship of the proletariat. The best thing was to get rid of him. But they hesitated, because nothing could be found against him to prove that he had been active against the revolution. He had not been a fascist, he had never belonged to the yellow syndicates. He had done

nothing but refuse to accept the proletarian organisations and to take part in class warfare; he had refused to strike, and had tried to better his position, working overtime against the orders of the Workers' Union, to which he did not belong. Daniel had always been the enemy of the organisation. His rebellious attitude against class discipline was well proved and he never made a secret of his contempt for the workers' leaders. But in spite of all that, there was no doubt that he was a genuine worker, a hundred-per-cent proletarian; he was neither "an enemy of the workers" nor "an underling of the bourgeoisie." What right had they to condemn him when the revolution was being waged in the name of the proletarians? They all knew in their innermost hearts that they could not rightfully condemn him.

Nevertheless he was condemned. Why? For the same reasons that the bourgeoisie used during the old régime. "Those that were not for them, were against them." Liberty was the enemy. Herein lay their weakness and their defeat.

For the day when the Council expelled comrade Daniel from the factory, that day the cause of the people was lost.

The rebels' guns were battering in vain against the trenches defending Madrid; the Italian and German aeroplanes were killing in vain women and children in the city. The cause of the people was lost, simply because the Council of Workers of a factory had decided

to expel a man for the sole crime of believing in the rights of universal freedom.

* * * * *

Before the day was over there arrived at dusk a patrol of militiamen. Bartolo saw them come and slipped away to hide. But where was he to go? The entrance of the factory was guarded by a couple of militiamen. . . . How could he escape? In a state of terror he wandered along the corridors of the building. He went past the offices giving a wide berth to the Management quarters, where he knew he had nothing to hope for. He found himself before the door of the administrator's office. On an impulse he opened the door and ran towards Don Jorgito.

"Help me! . . . They are after me! They will kill me, kill me. . . ."

Don Jorgito slumped in his arm-chair in helpless consternation. "I can't help you, lad. . . . They will kill me, too."

"Do help me, try and save me! Please, please, please, let me telephone?"

The old administrator, catching his panic, pointed to the telephone on the table. Bartolo dialled a number registered in his memory. While he waited for the reply, his pallid face, frozen into a rictus of fear, gave him the repellent aspect of a wax figure. There was no answer. He felt the anguish of death

running down his spine. . . . Yes . . . now. . . . An answer at last!

Bartolo, rambling along incoherently, stringing pathetic sentences as best he could, was speaking to the headquarters of the anarchist party, telling them that a patrol of militiamen had arrived to take him. He was going to be killed. He begged for their protection:

"Hurry, comrades! Come at once! They are after me! They will shoot me! Hurry . . . hurry. . . ."

He kept repeating this into the mouthpiece until he saw the door of the office open and a militiaman, pistol in hand, covering him. Don Jorgito got up courageously and placed himself between the two men.

"Stop! What do you want here?"

"I want that swine."

"He is a worker here, and I will not deliver him up to you or anyone else, unless by order of the Council of Workers."

Other militiamen had followed the first now. The leader approached Don Jorgito in a fury.

"He will come with us, and if you try to stop it, you'll come with us too, you old fool."

The old man was trembling, but he made a super-human effort and even thrust his hands against the leader who pushed him roughly aside, sending him stumbling, against a desk. Then, covering Bartolo with the pistol: "Come on, you. . . ."

Bartolo started mechanically to do as he was told. Don Jorgito made a last desperate effort and again

tried to come between Bartolo and the men. "Give me your word of honour that nothing will happen to him. . . . I shan't give him up if you don't. . . ."

For answer, one of them gave him a violent push which sent him sprawling on the floor like a rag doll. When he struggled to his feet again the office was empty. He felt a mortal anguish. He had failed to prevent a murder. Was it possible that men could be killed as easily as that? He sat at his desk, his head between his hands. The minutes went by registering nothing, ticking away the hours to . . . eternity. He could not understand. . . . He was stunned by the horror of it all. . . .

There he remained until night had fallen.

Suddenly he saw the door of the office open again. And there in front of him was Bartolo, looking like death itself. He was talking volubly, but he was exalted and jubilant. "They have not killed me, Don Jorgito! I am still alive, and you saved me." He caught hold of the old man's hands and kissed them, the tears running down his cheeks.

As best he could he related stumbingly and incoherently what had happened. The militiamen had taken him to the outskirts of Madrid and there questioned him for a few moments.

"I considered myself as good as dead. I knew that the spot was the one used for summary executions. Suddenly a patrol of anarchist militiamen appeared. My party had heard my telephone-call and they had

been sent to save me. The moment they arrived, and before any word was spoken, they whipped out their rifles, and said: 'This worker belongs to the party and he is free. Who dare to say otherwise?' Then they faced me and said: 'You can go now, comrade. Hurry up.'

"I ran and ran, as though the devil were at my heels, and came straight here, knowing that now at this hour there is no danger, for everyone but you and the gatekeeper have gone home. They were having a violent discussion about me. . . . But I am free, free! And I owe it to you for letting me use the telephone and delaying them as you did."

He pressed Don Jorgito's hand in his own hands, which were covered with cold sweat. Little by little the two men calmed down.

"I am alive, Don Jorgito. . . . Alive!"

Presently Bartolo said good-bye. . . . He was going home to his wife and his two children who were waiting for him and fearing the worst.

"Be careful, my boy. . . ."

"I have nothing to fear now, Don Jorgito. I am free. I am alive. God! how good it is. Just that!"

He went out into the street, his heart beating fast. The city was in darkness and deserted. He had recovered his strength and courage. There was no more danger for him. He forgot even that there was a war and a revolution. He went forward happy, realising perhaps for the first time the sweetness of life.

Turning a street corner he noticed a few shadowy forms skulking in the entrance of a house. His heart jumped. The shadows came towards him and when they were near enough he was blinded with the rays of a powerful electric torch. He tried to take his anarchist identity book from his pocket, but a voice he recognised froze the blood in his veins.

"You do not need that any more," it said coldly. "Come with us."

They went a few steps farther, where it was utterly dark. The voice, Bartolo recognised now, was that of the anarchist delegate of the Council of Workers. It said:

"You have lied to us. We accepted you in our party because you said that you had never been a fascist. Before the Council you declared that you had never belonged to that organisation. We believed you and saved you from the militiamen. But now we know that you are a traitor, a filthy fascist. For that you must pay with your life."

"I am no fascist!"

"Look!"

A square of stiff paper was placed before his eyes, held under the light of the torch.

"This is your personal card taken from the files of the Spanish fascists. Your portrait, you see, and your signature. . . ."

Bartolo, his eyes fixed on the paper, felt life slipping away; his heart was ice. Then there came the horrible contact on the back of his neck of a cold object, and

almost simultaneously a thundering crack in his brain, splitting into a thousand shreds his high hopes, his tribulations, strivings and treacheries.

They left him there, his face in the gutter. . . .

Don Jorgito had gone to bed.

"A good day's work," he said to himself as he turned off the light. "I have saved the life of a fellow creature."

* * * * *

Daniel was expelled from the factory on account of "his resistance to the workers organisation," and wandered about the besieged capital in search of bread for his wife and children. For many days he thought that his end was going to be the same as that of Bartolo and many others. He grew accustomed to the idea, but he had decided to kill before being killed if he had a chance. He procured a gun and carried it always in his jacket pocket ready to shoot. If a patrol happened to cross his way, he was at once on the alert. Had any man made the slightest gesture of a suspicious character, Daniel would have shot him. The great city was nothing more than the jungle for him. He was like a wild beast at bay. Very hungry, sometimes he was compelled to pass the militiamen's barracks. There he saw the revolutionaries well-armed and well-fed, helping themselves from huge cauldrons full of hot food. Why was he a pariah? Was he not a proletarian himself?

At last, one day, vanquished by pangs of starvation,

he forgot that he was tracked and entered one of the barracks to ask for a piece of bread.

"Bread? Bread," said a communist commissar emphatically, "is for men who fight for the revolution."

"I am a proletarian, ready to fight for bread and liberty."

The communist looked at him intently. Possibly a disguised fascist. . . . Bah. No, he was only a poor devil without revolutionary ideals, he concluded. Notwithstanding, he would do to serve and die at the front. He pushed towards him a dish of food and handed him a rifle. Almost involuntarily he took them. Changed into a militiaman Daniel would fight like the best of them, thought the commissar, who was no mean psychologist.

And so, soon after, he died heroically for a cause which was not his own. In Spain, there was no longer anyone left to defend what had always been his great and noble ideal, individual liberty.







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